

तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN
VISWA BHARATI
LIBRARY

940.4

T 38

OLD EUROPE'S SUICIDE

OLD EUROPE'S SUICIDE; OR THE BUILDING OF A PYRAMID OF ERRORS

AN ACCOUNT OF CERTAIN EVENTS IN
EUROPE DURING THE PERIOD 1912-1919

By BRIGADIER-GENERAL
CHRISTOPHER BIRDWOOD THOMSON

(General Staff Officer at War Office, 1911-1914; G.H.Q. France, 1914-1915;
Military Attache in Balkans, 1915-1917; attached as a British
Military representative to Supreme War Council
at Versailles, 1918-1919)

"For History of Times representeth the magnitude of actions and the public faces and deportments of persons, and passeth over in silence the smaller passages and motions of men and matters."—*Francis Bacon*.

LONDON: GEORGE ALLEN & UNWIN LTD.
RUSKIN HOUSE, 40 MUSEUM STREET, W.C. 1

First published in 1980

(All rights reserved)

DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO ONE

I HAVE ALWAYS CALLED

“ LA BELLE SAGESSE,”

• WHO GREATLY •

LOVES HER COUNTRY AND HER

• GARDEN BY

THE “ SLEEPING WATERS.”

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE	v.
CHAPTER	
I. (1912) A DAY ON THE DANUBE	1
II. (1912) A VIEW FROM A WINDOW	9
III. (1912) THE BATTLE OF KUMANOVO	19
IV. (1912) MACEDONIA	38
V. (1912-1913) ALBANIA	47
VI. (1913) THE SECOND BALKAN WAR AND THE TREATY OF BUCHAREST	57
VII. TWO MEN WHO DIED	67
VIII. (1914) PEACE AND WAR	71
IX. (1915) THE NEUTRAL BALKAN STATES	81
X. SLEEPING WATERS	95
XI. (1916) THE DISASTER IN RUMANIA	105
XII. (1917) THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE RUSSO-RUMANIAN OFFENSIVE	123
XIII. A MIDNIGHT MASS	139
XIV. "WESTERNERS" AND "EASTERNERS"	143
XV. (1919) THE PEACE CONFERENCE AT PARIS	157
XVI. LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD	173

PREFACE

SINCE the year 1912, the political evolution of Europe has been rapid. The period 1912-1919 will be memorable in history as one in which forces, at first diffused and without direct reaction on one another, as the issues narrowed were ranged in two hostile camps, and finally clashed in the Great World War. During this period, three dynasties have been overthrown, three pivots of European statecraft have been removed, and yet, in 1912, their strength and permanence were undisputed by the vast majority of human beings—not even the wildest visionary foresaw their swift and sudden downfall. But even had some seer perceived the writing on the wall, he would have shrunk back in dismay and prayed that the transition might be made more slowly from the old order to the new.

By their own acts the autocratic Empires perished prematurely; unscrupulous ambition, greed and false conceptions blinded their eyes to facts, they goaded their subjects into revolution and thus committed suicide, as a despairing warrior does who falls upon his sword.

This retrospect of the past seven years begins with the Balkan War of 1912; descriptions of certain events are given which to many readers will already be familiar. One justification for so doing is, that the writer was a witness of all that he relates; further, the endeavour has been made to link these happenings in their proper sequence, to establish a connection between cause and effect, to investigate the reasons why a universal conflagration ensued from a little Balkan War. The selfish intrigues of the Central Powers are contrasted with the equally vicious proceedings of the Imperial Russian Government, with the ignorance and inertia which characterised Great Britain's Continental policy, with the weakness of France in the presence of the German menace, with the uncertain attitude of Italy. Comments are made on the diplomatic negotiations in 1912 and 1913, on the conduct of the war, and on the treaty signed on June 28 in the Palace at Versailles. In some cases it has been possible to lift the veil which enshrouded diplomacy in South-Eastern Europe, to explore the mysterious labyrinths of officialdom, and, from the information so derived, to suggest an explanation why victorious democratic governments have failed to make a democratic peace.

Criticism has been unavoidable, it has been made in the light of wisdom which comes after the event and in no carping spirit. The sole aim of this book is to

stress the more obvious errors of the past and glean from them some guidance for the years that are to come. These years will be pregnant with tremendous possibilities for the future of mankind, a turning point in history has been reached. At a stroke the old landmarks in Europe have disappeared. Six Great Powers no longer control the situation, no need exists for a "Balance of Power," the term has become odious, it is and must always be associated with a system which, by its constitution, was powerless to do good—under its evil sway the strong imposed their will upon the weak, small States were exploited and set against each other in internecine strife, peace was precarious because peace treaties reposed on force and sowed the seeds of future wars.

Such have been the errors of the past, errors induced by passions, prejudice, ignorance, guile and greed; in a figurative sense they form a pyramid, rising from a broad base of primitive emotions, passing through narrowing stages of artifice and intrigue, and culminating in a point on which nothing can be built. Seven years of wasteful mad destruction may fitly be symbolised by a pyramid, a gloomy monument, taking up space, containing much material, useless save as a habitation for the dead.

Unfortunately for civilisation, the Peace Treaties concluded in Paris, so far from laying the foundations of a nobler edifice, have set the apex on this figurative

pyramid, have placed its topmost block. The resulting situation is charged with elements of deadly peril for democratic forms of government—humanity has been disillusioned, hopes that a new world would arise from the ashes of the old have been disappointed, "plain people" everywhere are wondering whether immense sacrifices in blood and treasure have not been made in vain. Democracy has triumphed in a material sense, and yet, throughout all Europe, a state of moral anarchy prevails. Hatred and a lust for vengeance have usurped the place of charity and commonsense, peoples mistrust their neighbours and their rulers, rich territories are unproductive for lack of confidence and goodwill.

To seek a remedy for these ills by using force is to court disaster and disregard the lessons of the past. The malady is moral, and only moral remedies can cure it. Force was required and has done its work, but force is a weapon with a double edge, and plays no part in human progress. The Central Empires were the most efficient champions of materialism the world has ever seen, now they are humbled and in the dust; if Democracy attempts to imitate their methods it will lose that force which has proved stronger than autocratic governmental systems, it will betray its cause.

To English-speaking men and women this book is a plea for the application of an Anglo-Saxon Policy to the problems arising from the war. By this is meant not

a policy such as that which dictates our present attitude towards Russia, Ireland, India or Egypt, but one based on our best traditions which are liberal and just. That policy would, from its nature, be straightforward, and, to begin with, independent; it could not be constrained to follow the counsels of expediency and to pursue devious ways, but it could inspire and direct all future international bodies on democratic lines.

Alphonse Daudet said of the British people that they had "firm shoulders ready to stand the weight of great responsibility," and this remark applies to all English-speaking men and women. We have incurred a great responsibility in Europe, we must take up this burden and become good Europeans. The first step in this direction is to inform ourselves. Questions of foreign policy can no longer be left to diplomats and experts who work in secret, these questions have a moral as well as a material significance for every self-respecting citizen, they affect not only his personal prosperity, but also the honour of the State.

A large part of this book is devoted to the Balkans, the reason being that the last great conflagration started in those regions, which were and are storm centres, and may once again disturb the peace of Europe. The episodes described vary in character and cover a wide field, sketches have been interpolated to give a touch of local colour and stimulate the interest

of the reader in brave and simple peasant populations,
But the same threads of thought run through all the
chapters and link them in a kind of rosary, whose
beads can be told each one apart, and be recounted one
by one.

LITTLESTONE-ON-SEA,

November 20, 1919.

OLD EUROPE'S SUICIDE

CHAPTER I.

A DAY ON THE DANUBE.

"WHEN the snows melt there will be war in the Balkans," had become an habitual formula in the Foreign Offices of Europe during the first decade of the twentieth century. Statesmen and diplomats found comfort in this prophecy on their return from cures at different Continental spas, because, the season being autumn, the snow had still to fall, and would not melt for at least six months. This annual breathing space was welcome after the anxieties of spring and summer; the inevitable war could be discussed calmly and dispassionately, preparations for its conduct could be made methodically, and brave words could be bandied freely in autumn in the Balkans. Only an imminent danger inspires fear; hope has no time limit, the most unimaginative person can hope for the impossible twenty years ahead.

Without regard either for prophecies or the near approach of winter, Bulgaria, Servia, Greece and Montenegro declared war on Turkey at the beginning of October, 1912. The Balkan Bloc had been formed, and did not include Rumania, a land where plenty had need of peace; King Charles was resolutely opposed to participation in the war, he disdained a mere Balkan alliance as unworthy of the "Sentinel of the Near East."

Bukarest had, for the moment anyhow, lost interest; my work there was completed, and a telegram from London instructed me to proceed to Belgrade. The trains *via* Budapest being overcrowded, I decided on the Danube route, and left by the night train for Orsova, in company with a number of journalists and business men from all parts of Rumania. We reached the port of the Iron Gate before dawn, and found a Hungarian steamer waiting; soon after daybreak we were heading up stream.

Behind us lay the Iron Gate, its gloom as yet unconquered by the sunrise; on our left the mountains of North-Eastern Servia rose like a rampart; on our right the foothills of the Carpathians terminated abruptly at the river's edge; in front the Danube shimmered with soft and ever-changing lights; a stillness reigned which no one cared to break, even the crew spoke low, like pious travellers before a shrine. War's alarms seemed infinitely distant from those glistening waters set in an amphitheatre of hills.

"How can man, being happy, still keep his happy hour?" The pageant of dawn and river and mountain faded as the sun rose higher; dim outlines became hard and sharp; the Iron Gate, surmounted by eddying wisps of mist, looked like a giant cauldron. The pass broadened with our westward progress revealing the plain of Southern Hungary, low hills replaced the mountains on the Servian bank. A bell rang as we stopped at a small river port, it announced breakfast and reminded us, incidentally, that stuffy smells are inseparable from human activities, even on the Danube, and within sight of the blue mountains of Transylvania.

My travelling companions were mainly British and French, with a sprinkling of Austrians and Italians. To all of them the latest development in the Balkan situation was of absorbing interest, and they discussed

it incessantly from every point of view. Their attitude, as I learnt later, was typical, not one of them had failed to foresee everything that had happened; in the case of the more mysterious mannered, one had a vague impression that they had planned the whole business, and were awaiting results like rival trainers of racehorses on the eve of a great race. These citizens of the Great Powers were, in their commerce with the Balkan peoples, a curious mixture of patron and partisan. The right to patronise was, in their opinion, conferred by the fact of belonging to a big country; the partisan spirit had been developed after a short residence in the Peninsula. This spirit was perhaps based on genuine goodwill and sincere sympathy, but it certainly was not wholly disinterested. There was no reason why it should have been. No man can, simultaneously, be a good citizen of two countries; he will nearly always make money in one and spend it in the other. Patriotism is made to cover a multitude of sins, and where money is being made, the acid test of political professions is their effect on business.

Listening to the conversation on the steamer I was astonished by the vivacity with which these self-appointed champions urged and disputed the territorial claims of each Balkan State in turn. Remote historical precedents were dragged in to justify the most extravagant extension of territory, secret treaties were hinted at which would change the nationality of millions of peasants, and whole campaigns were mapped out with a knowledge of geography which, to anyone fresh from official circles in London, was little short of amazing.

From breakfast on, the babel of voices continued, and it was curious to note how the different nationalities grouped themselves. The British were, almost to a man, pro-Bulgaria, they wanted Bulgaria to have the greater part of Macedonia and Thrace, some of them even claimed Constantinople and Salonika for their

protégée, they were on the whole optimistic as to the success of the Allies. The French and Italians urged the claims of Serbia, Greece and Rumania in Macedonia; in regard to Albania the French were in favour of dividing that country between Serbia and Greece, but this latter suggestion provoked vehement protests from the Italians. The three Austrians hardly joined in the discussion at all, one of them remarked that he agreed with the writer of the leading article in the *Neue Freie Presse* of a few days back, who compared the Balkan Peninsula to a certain suburb of Berlin, where there was one bank too many, and where, as a consequence, all banks suffered; in the Balkan Peninsula, according to this writer, there was one country too many, and a settled state of affairs was impossible until one of them had been eliminated; he didn't say which.

I asked whether a definite partition of the territory to be conquered was not laid down in the Treaty of Alliance. No one knew, or, at least, no one cared to say. There seemed to be a general feeling that Treaties didn't matter. The journalists were in a seventh heaven of satisfaction at the prospect of unlimited copy for several months to come; the business men expected to increase their business if all went well. On that Danube steamer the war of 1912 was popular, the future might be uncertain, but it was full of pleasant possibilities.

I thought of London and remembered conversations there three weeks before the declaration of war. The general opinion might have been summarised as follows: The Bulgars were a hardy, frugal race, rather like the Scotch, and, therefore, sympathetic; they were ruled over by a king called Ferdinand, who was too clever to be quite respectable. As for Serbia, the British conscience had, of course, been deeply shocked by the murder of the late King,

and the Servian Government had been stood in the diplomatic corner for some years, but the crime had been more or less expiated by its dramatic elements and the fact that it had taught everybody a little geography. King Nicholas of Montenegro was a picturesque figure and had an amiable habit of distributing decorations. In regard to Greece, there were dynastic reasons why we should be well disposed towards the descendants of the men who fought at Marathon, not to mention the presence in our midst of financial magnates with unmistakably Greek names. Lastly, the Turks. In London, in 1912, these people enjoyed considerable popularity; they were considered the only gentlemen in the Balkans, the upper-class ones, of course. Admittedly Turkish administration was corrupt and the Turks had a distressing habit of cutting down trees everywhere, but their most serious defect was that they were a little sticky about affording facilities for Western enterprise. This latter consideration was considered really important. Matters would improve, it was thought, after some changes had been made in the Consular Service.

The war had come at last. Few people in England knew its cause or its objects; many thought and hoped the Turks would win. We had played the part of stern moralists when a debauched and tyrannical youth received summary justice at the hands of his outraged subjects, but we watched lightheartedly the preparations for a struggle which would soak the whole Balkan Peninsula in blood.

Night was falling as we passed under the walls of the old fortress of Belgrade. During the last hour the conversation had taken a purely business turn, about coal concessions in the Ergene Valley* and a French Company which was being formed to exploit Uskub.

* The Ergene is a tributary of the Maritza and lies in Turkish Thrace.

Both localities were in Turkish territory but would change their nationality after the war, if the Balkan Allies were the victors.

The steamer ran alongside the jetty; the journey was, for most of us, at an end. Everyone was in high spirits; the near prospect of dinner in an hotel had produced a general feeling of optimism in regard to the Near Eastern question. One felt it wouldn't be the fault of anyone on our steamer if things went wrong. Our advice would always be given gladly and ungrudgingly, and we would accept any responsibility except that of putting into execution our own plans. We considered we were playing quite an important part in the Balkan drama, but, belonging as we did to big countries or Great Powers, once the fighting began we were forced to stand aside.

Belgrade seemed half asleep already. The city is built on a ridge overlooking the junction of the Save with the Danube. From the quay a long line of white houses was visible, flanked at one end by the Cathedral and a dark mass of trees, at the other by a large, ugly building, behind which stands the Royal Palace. Lights were few and far between, the aspect of the town was cold and inhospitable, this was evidently no busy centre eager to swallow up travellers and take their money; the Servian capital has nothing to offer to pleasure seekers, and sightseers must be content with scenery. Across the river, half a mile away, the lights of the Semlin cast a glare upon the sky, one could even hear faintly the strains of a Hungarian military band.

Only three of my fellow travellers remained on the landing stage; they were Austrians. Two of them were going to Semlin in the steamer, the third was, like myself, waiting for his baggage to be disembarked. This man and I were to see a good deal of each other

during the months that followed; he was the Austrian Military Attaché at Belgrade.

The steamer whistle gave the signal for departure and farewells were exchanged. Just before stepping on board, one of the departing Austrians said, "Well, Otto, when next we meet I suppose the Turks will be here," to which the military representative of the Dual Monarchy replied, "The sooner the better." He then got into his cab and drove off to the house where, for three years, he had enjoyed all the privileges due to his diplomatic functions.

I had spent the whole day with a crowd of talkative and communicative men, but, as a rickety old cab took me up the hill towards the town, I remembered more distinctly what the comparatively silent Austrians had said than anything else that I had heard. These men seemed to mix up private business and politics less than the others; they gave the impression of thinking on big lines, of representing a policy of some sort.

In October, 1912, many people still believed that the British Government had a Balkan policy. The war had been foreseen for so many years, its repercussion on Asia Minor and the whole Mohammedan world could hardly fail to be considerable, while the risk of the conflagration spreading, so as to involve all Europe, was universally recognised. Under such circumstances, it seemed incredible that those responsible for the maintenance of the British Empire would leave anything to chance. Of course, we British had a policy, but personally I hadn't the faintest idea what it was, nor, for the moment, could I think of anyone who had.

At last the hotel was reached. A sleepy "concierge" showed me to my room, a vast apartment whose outstanding feature was its painted ceiling. This work of art was oval in shape and consisted of a vault of almost inky blue spangled with stars, round

which were cherubs and angels in appropriately exiguous costumes. The subject was perhaps meant to be a celestial choir, but the artist had somehow missed his mark; the faces were neither angelic nor cherubic; they wore an air of mystery not unmingled with self-satisfaction. The figures emerged in stiff, conventional fashion from the edges of the ceiling into the central blue, and, if it hadn't been for their lack of dress and look of conscious superiority, they might have been a collection of quite ordinary men, gathered round an oval table stained with ink. One of the cherubs bore a strong facial resemblance to a distinguished diplomat of my acquaintance; he was whispering something in his neighbour's ear, and the latter seemed amused. The neighbour was a cherub, not an angel; he had a queer, wizened face of somewhat Slavonic type.

I was tired out, but I did not sleep well. I had been thinking about British policy in the Balkans before I fell asleep, and had strange dreams which were almost nightmares. It was all the fault of the ceiling; that cherub was so exactly like the diplomat and I dreamed he was telling the other one a secret, this explained the whispering, and that it was an important State secret, connected with my visit to Belgrade.

Who knows? The artist who had painted that hideous ceiling may have done so in a mood of irony. He may have chosen, as models for his cherubs, some well-known personages engaged in propping up a crazy structure known as "the balance of power in Europe."

CHAPTER II.

BELGRADE—OCTOBER, 1912.

A VIEW FROM A WINDOW.

MOBILISATION was nearly completed when I paid my first visit to the Servian War Office, an unpretentious building situated half way down a side street leading from the Royal Palace to the River Save. On entering, I congratulated myself that, at last, I was to meet and speak with a real Servian; hitherto I had met nearly every other nationality in the legations, hotels, and other places frequented by visitors to foreign capitals. At the time of my visit, the only society in Belgrade consisted of foreign diplomats; the hotels were managed and staffed by Austrians, Swiss and Italians; the roads were being paved by an Austrian contractor, employing Austrian workmen and, according to current gossip, the country was being ruled by the Russian Minister.

Now that hostilities were imminent, I presumed that the Servians would be allowed to do their own fighting. This supposition proved to be correct, the Great Powers had decided not to interfere in what was a purely Balkan struggle, they intended to keep the ring and see fair play.

So much I had already learned in Belgrade, from people in a position to know and who seemed to know most things except the authentic Plan of Campaign. Their resentment at not being given this was evident, and when asked the reason, they would reply that

they wanted to communicate it to their respective governments and War Offices, in the strictest confidence of course. The Servian General Staff had kept their secret well, far too well for the cosmopolitan band who earned their living by acquiring and circulating *strictly confidential information*. I did not expect to solve the mystery myself, but the prospect of getting to close quarters with its authors gave me some satisfaction. I had begun to admire these men one never met, who didn't seem to ask for advice, though they often got it, and who were shouldering the responsibility for Servia's future action.

After being conducted to an upstairs room, I was asked to wait, Colonel — (then followed two names which I didn't quite catch, but noted mentally as beginning, respectively, with a "G" and a "P") begged to be excused for keeping me waiting, but would come as soon as he could; an unexpected visitor had arrived whose business was urgent. This information was imparted by a young staff officer, in excellent German, his message given, he left me alone with some straight-backed chairs, a table with a green baize cover, three pictures, and a large bow window facing north.

The pictures were poor. One was a portrait of King Peter, whose brilliant uniform recalled a play I had seen just before leaving London. Another represented a battle between Servians and Turks, dagger and axe were being used freely, the ground was strewn with dead and wounded, horsemen were riding over foe and friend alike, some at a dignified walk, others galloping madly, but all seemed equally indifferent to the feelings of the men on the ground. The meeting between Wellington and Blucher after Waterloo, as conceived by a nineteenth-century artist, was child's play compared to this battlepiece. The third picture portrayed three horsemen in rich attire riding abreast.

along a woodland glade followed by their retainers. The scene was historical; it was the last ride of the centre horseman, a former reigning prince, whose companions, and incidentally his kinsmen, had assassinated him in that very glade.

These pictures were only too typical of Servia's past history; they explained the worn, anxious expression on the old King's face and, seen for the first time on the eve of yet another war, gave food for reflection. Human nature seemed unchanging and unchangeable; history was about to repeat itself in battles and murder, hatred and anger, suffering and death. Modern weapons would replace the dagger and the axe and the men on horseback would be provided with motor cars: these would be the only differences.

It is usually better to ride than to walk. Philosophers, as a rule, prefer the latter form of progression; perhaps that is why so few of them have been kings and why cities so seldom 'rest from their evils.'

My sole remaining distraction was the window. It commanded a wide view over the Save and Danube valleys and looked straight down on the great railway bridge which links Servia with Central Europe. At the far end of the bridge a Hungarian sentry was clearly visible, and all along the Save's Hungarian bank were earthworks and searchlights. Away to the right, and about a mile distant, were the barracks of Semlin; rumour said they were full to overflowing.

Austria-Hungary was watching her small Southern neighbour mobilise and taking a few precautionary measures, in order, no doubt, to be in a better position to keep the ring.

Standing at the open window in that quiet room, I felt I was learning more about Servia's real position than could possibly have been gleaned from all the talk on the Danube steamer. Perhaps it was the instinct of an islander, but, as I looked across the river, I had

a feeling of vague uneasiness, amounting almost to physical discomfort; an immensely greater force was there, passive but watchful, and it was so near, within easy range of field artillery.

I remembered being taken in my childhood to see the snakes fed at the Zoo. Two monster reptiles lay motionless in a glass case. Some live rabbits were inserted, and at once began to frisk lightheartedly round their new quarters. Suddenly one of the reptiles raised its head; all movement ceased for a brief moment; each rabbit crouched, paralysed by terror; the dry, merciless eyes of the python travelled slowly round the cage, his mate stirred expectantly, and then! The horrid, darting jaws did their work—one by one those poor rabbits disappeared. I recollected having been especially sorry for the last one. In Central Europe, at least one python State lay north of the Danube, and to the south were rabbit States, embarking on a ghastly frolic.

Bathed in bright October sunlight, the scene before me was both varied and splendid. The town lay immediately below, beyond it the river and vast spaces framed by mountains, some of them so distant that their presence was suspected rather than perceived. The line of junction between the Save and Danube was clearly defined, the white waters of the former confounding themselves reluctantly with the Danube's steely blue. Both rivers seemed to tell a story; the Save told of mountains, of turbulent, oppressed peoples and their hopes and fears; the Danube of plains and rich cities, of old Europe's last triumph over Islam, of heroes and conquerors, its broad stream carried the echoes of Ulm and Ratisbon, Vienna and Buda Pesth.

Here, at Belgrade, the great river seemed to have found a new task—the task of dividing an ancient empire with immemorial traditions from new States

and young peoples, who still retained a bitter memory of the Turkish yoke. Here began a divided allegiance, an unnatural schism between North bank and South. It was as though the Save had brought down trouble from the mountains; the white line of foam which marked the meeting of the waters was a symbol, a symbol of eternal discord between the past and present.

The door opened and a short, thick-set man in the uniform of a Colonel of the Servian General Staff entered the room; he spoke in German, but with some difficulty, and excused himself for having kept me waiting. Then followed the usual commonplaces, in which he expressed his admiration for the British character and our free institutions, while I assured him of the deep interest taken by all classes at home in the future prosperity and development of Servia.

I asked about the mobilisation, and he answered that it had astonished even the most optimistic; 98 per cent. of the reservists had joined the colours, many of them bringing carts and bullocks as free-will offerings. The declaration of war had been received with boundless enthusiasm by the peasants, and volunteers were flocking in from every part of the kingdom. The field army was well equipped. The question of transport had presented many difficulties, but had been solved by ruthlessly cutting down every human requirement to the absolute minimum; this was possible, he explained, because the Servian peasant soldiers could live on very little, but I would see for myself before long. Ammunition? For the first time he hesitated. Yes, there was enough for a short campaign, if the strictest economy were exercised—for six months, perhaps; but it was difficult to estimate expenditure as, except for the Manchurian war, there were no data to go on. I suggested that stocks could be renewed. He flushed a little and

replied that most of Servia's arms and ammunition came from Austria.

Unconsciously, on my part anyhow, we had moved to the window, and while the Colonel was talking I noticed the almost uncanny frequency with which his eyes sought the far bank of the Save. Such restless eyes they were, light grey in colour. One could imagine them blazing with anger, but occasionally one caught a hunted look, as though they had known fear. Colonel G—— P——, like most Servian officers, was of peasant origin. The King himself was the grandson of a swincherd. There had been a time in Servia when every man, who could, had transferred his family and household goods to what is now called Montenegro, so great had been their terror of the Turks. The poorer peasants had remained and had borne the tyrant's yoke; their descendants, of either sex, retained the furtive, quailing glance of ancestors who had lived in dread. Even the little children had this look of atavistic fear.

The grey eyes softened when he spoke of the peasants, their simplicity, their endurance, and their faith in ultimate victory; his one idea seemed to be to give a fair chance to these peasant soldiers; to avoid political complications at home and abroad and, above all, to get the ammunition up to the front line.

I looked instinctively across the river; the key of the whole situation was there. He must have guessed my thoughts, for the conversation turned at once to more general questions. The Colonel was convinced that the Great Powers would not interfere; their neutrality might even be benevolent. He had just received from the Austrian Military Attaché (the visitor who had kept me waiting) most satisfactory assurances in regard to the supply of ammunition. Belgrade would be entirely denuded of troops, as also the whole northern frontier. This had been rendered

possible by the assurance that there was no danger of interference from the North; a Servian force would occupy the Sanjak of Novi Bazar! He noted my surprise, and added quickly, "With the full knowledge of the Austro-Hungarian Government." The main army would advance on Uskub (he gave the town its Servian name of Skoplje). On its left would be a mixed Serbo-Bulgar army, and on its right the Third Servian Army under one of their best generals. All the three armies would converge on Uskub, near which there would probably be the first big battle. Uskub was the first objective. He insisted that it was a genuine Servian town. The Emperor Dushan had held his Court there in the great days of old Servia. Further south lay Monastir and Salonika, the real prizes; of these he did not speak, and I refrained from putting inconvenient questions. I had learned so much already.

A chance reference to Servia's economic and industrial situation provoked an almost passionate outburst from this hitherto self-contained man. Servia needed a port; it was the only means of gaining economic independence. Hitherto, Austria had held Servia by the throat, but with an outlet to the sea his country could work out its own salvation. He reeled off some astounding statistics in regard to the population of the eastern Adriatic seaboard between Trieste and Montenegro. I ventured to suggest that Austria would not lightly relax her hold on such valuable possessions—as Cattaro, for example. He assented, but repeated with vehemence, "Servia's first economic objective must be an Adriatic port," Durazzo or San Giovanni di Medua would do—to begin with. When I enquired how it was proposed to deal with the Albanians, an ugly, cruel look crept into his face as he hissed out a German slang expression for extermination. The Albanians were, in his opinion, nothing more nor less

than thieves and murderers for whom there was no place in the Peninsula.

I was beginning to understand. The war about to commence was only the first phase; success would give to Serbia sufficient territory and economic independence to enable her to prepare for a greater and inevitable struggle with Austria-Hungary. The pitfalls were many. No one realised the difficulties more fully than the man standing with me at that window, who was even anxious to expose them in his eagerness to gain a little sympathy. He knew that wise and wary statesmanship would be required in handling the Bulgarian question. The hot-heads at home would have to be restrained. At all costs peace with Bulgaria would have to be maintained, and this would be difficult. Serbia had her megalomaniacs who were impatient and heedless of prudent counsels, whose aspirations in regard to national aggrandisement were boundless, who wanted to do everything at once and brooked no delay.

Almost two hours had passed, and it was nearly noon when I rose to say farewell. While expressing my best wishes for Serbia's success in this first phase of her great adventure, I remarked that, presumably, Belgrade would cease to be the capital after Uskub had been taken and the Albanian coastline reached—a more central and less exposed position seemed desirable for the Royal residence and seat of Government. His answer was emphatic—Belgrade must always remain the capital, the Save was not the northern frontier of old Serbia; all that—and he waved his hand towards the north—was Servian territory right up to and beyond Karlovci, which, at one time, had been in the diocese of a Servian bishop.

When I left the Servian War Office that day I had forgotten all about rabbits and pythons; those dauby pictures portrayed the past, the future was the only

thing that mattered. A passionate drama would shortly enact itself under the eyes of a cynical, unbelieving Europe; in that drama Servia would play a leading part and, if Colonel G—— P—— was typical of his countrymen, the final act would find another setting than the Balkans. From an open window this man had looked out upon a spacious and inspiring scene, had caught its message, and, no more a mere official speaking a foreign tongue, had found the rugged eloquence of a true soldier-statesman. He might have been a Servian Cromwell; such men are dangerous to their oppressors.

An irresistible craving for quiet and solitude had overcome me. I drove to a place on the outskirts of Belgrade close to the Danube's bank, and walked down to the river's edge across flat, waterlogged meadows. At this point, the troubled Save had found peace in the greater stream, a mighty volume of water slid smoothly past the sedges, whispering mysteriously; sometimes the whisper swelled, and weed and wave, stirred by a passing breeze, filled the surrounding space with sighing sounds.

CHAPTER III.

THE BATTLE OF KUMANOVO.

ALTHOUGH the Balkan *bloc* of 1912 was formed by men whose motives were as various as their interests and personalities, it was based on a correct appreciation of the general situation. It offered a prospect of relieving the intolerable tension which prevailed in the Balkan Peninsula at the expense of the Ottoman Empire, an Empire whose natural frontier was in Turkish Thrace,* and whose administration in South-Eastern Europe had been both wasteful and tyrannical. A continuance of Turkish sovereignty in Macedonia and Albania had become an anachronism. Justice, however wild, demanded the expulsion of the Turks, and all who knew the history of the Balkans approved the action of the Allied States.

Not only did the creation of this *bloc* bid fair to provide a solution of purely Balkan questions. While it lasted it could not fail to have a stabilising influence in the "Balance of Power" in Europe. From a military point of view, the combined forces of Bulgaria, Servia and Greece were a far from negligible factor; they would have served both as a buffer between Slav and Teuton and as a deterrent to the ambitions of Pan-Germans and Pan-Slavs alike. From this combination of the Balkan States the Western European Powers had everything to gain.

In the autumn of 1912 an oligarchy of schemers and mediocrities held the reins of power in Constantinople.

* On the Enes-Midia line, thus leaving Constantinople in Turkish hands with a small hinterland in Europe.

Their position was precarious, their inexperience great; to a large extent they were dependent on the goodwill of the Great Powers, from whom they sought advice. The advice given, though inspired by very different motives, had the same effect: it increased the self-satisfaction of the "Young Turks" and gave them a sense of security which was wholly unjustified by the circumstances of the case.

Great Britain and France posed as indulgent friends of the new regime in Constantinople, whose liberal professions seemed to announce a moral convalescence. Loans were to be the solvent of all difficulties. Under their quickening influence regeneration and reform would blossom in a desert air, while interests and ideals would march hand in hand. The policy of the French and British Governments was, in essence, the maintenance of the *status quo*. Both counselled moderation in all things, with the possible exception of concessions to certain financial groups. The "Young Turks" listened dutifully, as people do who are looking for a loan.

Austro-Hungarian policy aimed at fomenting disorder in Macedonia and Albania, with the object of justifying intervention and eventually annexation. These two Turkish provinces were to share the fate of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Their acquisition would complete the economic encirclement of Servia and reduce that country to the position of a vassal State. Behind Austria-Hungary stood Germany, whose communications with Asia Minor needed a buttress in the Balkans. The final object of the Central Empires was the disintegration of Turkey in Europe. In the autumn of 1912, however, the Turkish plums were not yet ripe for plucking; a few more years of misrule were required. In the meantime, the Austro-Hungarian and German Governments encouraged, secretly, the process known as "Ottomanisation" in

Macedonia and Albania, with all its attendant ills. The Young Turks listened gladly; such advice appealed to their natural and traditional instincts.

At this period the vision of Italian statesmen hardly extended beyond the Eastern Adriatic seaboard. Moreover, Italy was a member of the Triple Alliance and held a merely watching brief in and around Constantinople.

Alone among the Great Powers, Russia was in close touch with the Balkan situation. For some years Russian diplomats and military agents had possessed preponderating influence in all the Balkan capitals; they had appreciated the scope and intensity of the smouldering passions which, however transitorily, were to force into concerted action the Bulgars, Serbs and Greeks; they alone had estimated correctly the military efficiency of the armies of the Balkan States and, almost alone, they knew the contents of the Secret Treaty, signed in February, 1912, which brought into existence the Balkan bloc. Russian policy was definitely anti-Turk: it aimed at the fulfilment of the testament of Peter the Great, at the expulsion of the Turks from Europe, at the establishment of Russian sovereignty over the Bosphorus and the Golden Horn. It is an old saying that diplomatists are paid to lie abroad for the benefit of their countries; successive Russian ambassadors at Constantinople plied the Sublime Porte with soothing words; all was for the best in the best of all possible Turkeys, while plots matured and hostile armaments were perfected. The Young Turks listened somewhat fearfully; it seemed too good to be true, but still they listened and believed.

False counsel reacting on inertia had an inevitable result; the declaration of war found the Ottoman Empire utterly unprepared. The mobilisation of the Balkan armies was completed with unexpected

rapidity and was followed by a simultaneous invasion of Turkey in Europe by Bulgarian, Greek and Servian forces. The Bulgars crossed the frontier of Thrace, without encountering serious opposition, and advanced towards the line Adrianople-Kirk Kilise; the Greeks entered Southern Macedonia, where the Turkish garrisons were weak and scattered; the Serbs invaded the Vilayet of Kossovo and joined hands with the Montenegrins in the Sanjak of Novibazar. At every point the Balkan armies had penetrated into Turkish territory. In Constantinople confusion reigned supreme; disasters were exaggerated, sinister rumours passed from lip to lip, even the shrine dedicated to the "Divine Wisdom"† was not considered safe.

The Russian Government looked on complacently—its plans were taking shape. In London and Paris curiosity was more in evidence than any emotion which might have been dictated by knowledge or foresight. In Vienna and Berlin the news was received with anger and astonishment; better things had been expected from King Ferdinand of Bulgaria. The stubborn fact remained, however, and called for immediate action. A German military mission had for some years directed the training of the Turkish army; the time had now come for that mission to direct Turkish strategy. Events had moved too quickly for the cynical, realistic policy of the Central Empires, but they could be turned to good account if, at the outset of the campaign, the Serbs were crushed. And so, while yielding ground in Thrace and Southern Macedonia, the Turks massed troops at Uskub, and made their plans for an offensive battle against the Serbs advancing southwards into Kossovo.

My lot had been cast with the Servian forces and, by great good fortune, I was able to join the First

† Santa Sofia.

Army as it poured through the defiles of the Kara Dagħ into the region called "Old Serbia." At Belgrade the talk had been of a war of liberation from economic thralldom, of a conflict between the Crescent and the Cross; with the armies it was otherwise. No thought of policy or secret treaties, or even of religion, confused the minds of Serbia's peasant soldiers; they marched like men called to fulfil their country's destiny, singing the story of their race, making the mountains echo with their martial songs. There was no need to understand their language to catch the meaning of these singers; they sang of sorrow and tribulation, of centuries of helplessness in oppression, but the note of defiance was never absent; defeat was admitted but never despair. Something unconquerable was in their hearts, stirring their blood and nerving every muscle—the spirit of revenge. Bacon, in his famous essay, says: "The most tolerable sort of revenge is for those wrongs which there is no law to remedy." The Serbs had five centuries of wrongs to avenge, and the Great Powers had produced no law as a remedy, except the law of force; by force these peasants, in their turn, meant to obtain "a kind of wild justice."

For them, the plains of Kossovo were sacred; there had been made the last heroic stand against a cruel and implacable foe; there had occurred the dreadful rout, whose few survivors told the tale, at first in frightened whispers, then in songs—long, wailing songs, like dirges. Songs are the chronicles of Slavonic races, they pass into the nation's ritual and permeate its life. Succeeding generations sang these songs of Kossovo, and so the legend grew, and spread to all the Balkan lands; each humble home, even in far Rumania, had heard of Lazar, a Tsar who led his people and gave his life up for them on a battlefield known as "the Field of Blackbirds." When princes

perish thus, servility conspires with pity to make them martyrs. The dead Tsar led his people still, and far more potently in death than life; his legendary form, looming gigantic through the mists of time, beckoned them, irresistibly, to blood-soaked fields, where, once again, the Turks and Serbs would meet in mortal strife.

The First Servian Army, under the command of the Crown Prince Alexander, had crossed the old Serbo-Turkish frontier near Vranje. After two exhausting marches in enemy territory, the leading units, emerging from the mountains, saw in front of them an undulating plain; in the distance some minarets, surmounting a collection of whitewashed houses, stood out against the sky. The Serbs were in sight of Kumanovo, a town situated 15 miles north-east of Uskub, on the western fringe of a vast stretch of pasture land bearing the local name of "Ovce Polje" or "Sheepfield." Running across the plain, from east to west, a line of trenches was clearly visible; on the railway track from Salonica many trains were standing, from which men descended and, after forming into groups, moved outwards to the trenches. It required no special military acumen to appreciate the fact that the Turks intended to make a stand at Kumanovo. The battlefield was flanked on the west by a railway and on the east by a small river, an affluent of the Vardar; to the north lay mountains, to the south the plain extended as far as the eye could reach.

Night was falling, in a hurricane of wind and rain, when the Servian advanced guards reached the northern limit of the plain and began to place their outposts. During the day there had been skirmishes with hostile patrols; everyone was soaked to the skin, and supplies were a march behind. I must have seen several hundred infantry soldiers take up their

appointed positions in a cluster of stony kopjes, which marked the extreme left of the Servian outpost line, and not a murmur of complaint or grumbling reached my ears. Sometimes men passed who muttered to themselves. I asked a Servian staff officer what they were saying; he replied simply, "Their prayers." And on this note began their vigil.

All through the night the rain-sodden, wearied troops were arriving at their bivouacs. The front taken up was unduly extended and, notably on the extreme left, there were many gaps. The dawn revealed a scene of desolation and considerable disorder. Soon after sunrise the Turks attacked.

Throughout the first day of battle the Turks pursued offensive tactics, attempting repeatedly to turn the Servian left. More than once the situation on this flank became critical. Reinforcements arrived in dribblets and in an exhausted condition; they were at once absorbed in the fighting line, without regard for any other consideration except the saving of a local situation. Of higher leading there was little, it was just a soldiers' battle—hard, brutal fighting, stubborn valour in the front line, chaotic confusion behind.

Late in the evening I saw a small party of horsemen moving rapidly from battalion to battalion, immediately behind the front line. Riding by himself, a little in advance of the others, was a young man with a thin, sallow face, wearing *pince nez*. He stopped frequently and spoke with the officers and men. When he had passed on, they followed him with their eyes and seemed to move more briskly about their business. To these rough men from all parts of Servia this brief visit had a special interest; the young man who rode alone and in front was the Crown Prince Alexander, and most of them were seeing him for the first time.

In more senses than one the Crown Prince was alone that day. His exalted rank had conferred on him the command of an army; his extreme youth made it hard for him to impose his will on a staff of military experts. At the headquarters of the First Servian Army there was the usual percentage of senior officers whose peace training had taken from them any human or imaginative qualities they may ever have possessed; who regarded war as a science, not a drama; men without elasticity of mind, eternally seeking an analogy between their own situation, at any given moment, and some vaguely similar situation in the career of their favourite strategist (generally von Moltke). Since in war at least, analogies are never perfect, such men lack quick decision and, almost invariably, they take the line of least resistance.

During the afternoon preceding the evening visit of the Crown Prince to his troops, several influential and elderly officers had been advising retreat; they had studied the map carefully, and in their opinion no other course was left to the Commander of the First Army. All the text books confirmed this view, and in these books were embodied the great principles of strategy. They pointed out to Prince Alexander that he owed it to himself and his country to retire, as soon as possible, to a new position and fight again another day. They were absolutely sincere and were convinced that, since the Servian left was in process of being turned, all the military experts would approve of what might, euphemistically, be termed "a strategic retirement."

Many great military reputations have been made by the skilful conduct of a retreat and, according to their lights, the advocates of such tactics on this occasion were not far wrong in their reasoning. Only outsiders judge by results; military experts live in a

charmed and exclusive international circle, in which method is everything.

The Crown Prince had a great deal at stake. This battle marked a turning point in his life, and with him lay the final decision. He never hesitated. "Stand fast and counter-attack all along the line at the earliest possible moment" was the order issued, and then this descendant of a warrior swineherd mounted his horse and went to see his soldiers. Bad strategy, perhaps, but understandable to the men who were bearing the brunt of the battle on the "Sheep-field" of Northern Macedonia.

At General Headquarters Colonel G.— P.— shared and interpreted the Crown Prince's views. He knew the almost superhuman powers of endurance of the Servian peasants, and put his faith in them. King Peter upheld his son's decision; reinforcements and ammunition were sent to the 1st Army, on whose prowess depended the future fate of Servia.

The second day of battle dawned fair, from early morning onwards the Turkish assaults were launched in rapid succession, and without regard for loss of life. It was evident that the Turks were making their great effort in this theatre of operations. By skilful manipulation of the Press the Bulgars had given the impression that every theatre, except their own in Thrace, was secondary; they argued that the Turks would be so terrified by the Bulgarian threat to Constantinople that all available forces would be concentrated for the protection of the Turkish capital, and that a purely defensive attitude would be maintained in Macedonia. The facts were all against these suppositions. The only theatre in which the Turks were acting offensively was Macedonia; in Thrace, after being completely surprised by the Bulgarian advance, they were in full retreat; in Northern Macedonia a plan, dictated by the Central Empires,

was being put into execution, and the destruction of the 1st Servian Army was its objective.

From prisoners' statements the Turks appeared to be certain of success, a large force of cavalry under Ali Mechmet Pasha was being held in reserve south of Kumanovo ready to take up the pursuit.

On the morning of the third day the Servian front was still unbroken. During the preceding night reinforcements had arrived from the general reserve, the gaps in the front line had been filled up, and the heavy artillery moved into position. The Turkish offensive persisted throughout the day, but late in the afternoon the Serbs made several successful local counter-attacks. After dark an unusually large number of priests visited the front line, the men crowded round them eagerly, and listened to their words.

At daybreak, on the fourth day, a large force of Turks was seen moving towards the Servian left flank; the Turkish commander was making a last bid for victory. Advancing in close formation the attacking columns suffered heavy losses from the fire of some batteries of howitzers. On other parts of the front an ominous calm prevailed. Servian soldiers were swarming in the ragged trenches which had been thrown up during the course of the battle. Priests in their flowing black robes were everywhere.

Suddenly, from the centre of the Servian line, a salvo of guns gave a signal! It was the signal for the counter-attack.

Surely, never since Friedland had such a sight been seen.

As though by magic the space between the Turkish trenches and the Servian front was seamed by lines of infantry dashing recklessly forward with bayonets fixed. Their onrush was irresistible, the Turkish front was not pierced—it was swept away.

Within one hour of that amazing charge the battle of Kumanovo was lost and won. The Turkish General's last hope must have disappeared when a well-aimed *refale* from a group of Servian howitzers threw the massed squadrons of Ali Mechmet Pasha into hopeless confusion. Hundreds of riderless horses scoured the plain, and through them, ever pressing forward, surged the grey lines of Servia's indomitable infantry. The Turks were not merely driven back, they were routed, a rabble of unarmed men fled across the plain to Uskub and spread panic in the town; no attempt was made to man the forts, a general *sauve qui peut* took place; a well-equipped and numerous army melted away in headlong flight.

By noon Uskub had ceased to be a Turkish town, its name was, once more, Skoplje.

During the afternoon I came across some regiments which had fought on the extreme right, forming up about five miles north of the town. The men grinned with pride and satisfaction as they showed the blood-stains on their bayonets; they had come far for this, but knew no fatigue. Though so fierce in battle and filled with blood-lust, they were curiously gentle in their ways with the wounded of both sides and their prisoners; one felt that one was with a lot of big, strong children who would bear almost anything up to a certain point, but that beyond that point it was most inadvisable to go.

All sorts of wild stories were being circulated. It was said that a man, dressed in white and riding a white horse, had led the charge—many had seen the apparition, and had recognised Czar Lazar.

A strange meeting took place that evening. The Consuls of the Great Powers in Uskub had remained in the panic-stricken town. When the last vestige of Turkish authority had left, they sallied forth in

carriages to meet the conquering host, bringing with them the keys of the town. On reaching the Servian outpost line they were forced to alight, and, after being blindfolded, to proceed on foot to the headquarters of the Crown Prince, a distance of $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles. The scene was not without a certain irony. On the one hand, a young Balkan Prince, elated with victory, surrounded by his Staff; on the other, the representatives of Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy blindfolded, muddy and dishevelled by a long tramp in goloshes through black, sticky mud. Fine feathers make fine birds, national prestige has, after all, something to do with gold lace.

The conqueror received these unexpected envoys graciously and accepted the keys, but he slept that night among his soldiers on the ground that they had won.

Few triumphs have found a more appropriate setting. To the south the plain terminated in an arc of hills already dimmed by gathering twilight; spanning the arc the River Vardar shone like a band of silver; between the river and the hilks lay Skoplje, the minarets of its numerous mosques served as reminders of the conquered Turk; commanding both the valley and the town a fortress stood, its old grey walls had sheltered Dushan, the greatest of all the Servian Tsars. These were the fruits of victory—and the tokens of revenge.

I rode back to our bivouac with the Russian Military Attaché, and quoted to him the words of Goethe after Valmy; we were indeed entering on a new world in the Balkans. My companion put his thoughts into far more concrete form: * "C'est la liquidation de l'Autriche" was his comment on the situation. The wish was father to the thought, a frequent source of

* "It is the liquidation of Austria."

error in Russian calculations; Servia's victory was, undoubtedly, a discomfiture for the Ball Platz,* but the final liquidation of Austria-Hungary was not yet accomplished. That consummation was reserved for a later date, and for a more universal tragedy.

Our road led across the battlefield. On every side were traces of the struggle, corpses of men, dead and dying horses. Near the railway we found a Turkish gun team, of which five of the horses had been killed or wounded by a shell, the sixth horse, a big solemn-looking grey, was standing uninjured by his fallen comrades, an image of dumb distress. A Servian soldier, charged with the collection of loose horses, appeared upon the scene, and, after putting the wounded animals out of their pain, turned to the grey, which had been standing quietly watching the man at work. Obviously, the next step was departure, but here a difficulty arose. The solitary survivor of the gun team was loth to leave, and the look in his honest, wistful eyes was infinitely pathetic. A colloquy ensued between the representatives of the Russian Empire and the Servian peasant. Both were Slavs, and, in consequence, horse lovers; both agreed that this horse deserved and desired death; there and then an act of extravagance, almost impossible in any other army, was perpetrated, and the gun team was reunited in some equine Nirvana known only to Slavs and Arabs. "Another victim of the war," I remarked to my companion, as we continued on our road. He evidently considered this observation as typical of my British lack of imagination, and proceeded to recite a poem describing the fall of snowflakes. Russians can witness human suffering with indifference, but are curiously sentimental in regard to nature, animals and flowers; nearly all Slavs

* Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office in Vienna.

possess a dangerous charm, the charm of men with generous impulses uncontrolled by guiding principles; their speech is splendid and inspiring, their actions uncertain, since they are ever at the mercy of lurking passions and events.

Just before darkness fell a number of birds, coming from all directions, settled upon the battlefield, they were black in colour; round Kumanovo spread another "Field of Blackbirds." But these were not blackbirds in the ordinary sense; they were carrion crow brought by some instinct from their lonely haunts to batten on man's handiwork littering that death-strewn plain. A raucous cawing made the evening ludeous; sometimes a cry, more harsh and guttural than the rest, seemed to propound a question, an answering clamour followed, approving, quarrelling; it might have been a parliament of birds, summoned fortuitously, already passing laws to regulate this unexpected intercourse. Gloating, but not yet satisfied, the stronger birds had made themselves law-givers, and meant to impose respect for property upon their weaker brethren.

That night the Austrian Military Attaché left Servian Headquarters for Vienna. His Russian colleague explained his sudden departure on the ground that, according to the Austro-Hungarian programme, the Turks ought to have won. It may have been unwise for a small Balkan State to cross the wishes of so great a Power; but neither doubts nor fears assailed the Serbs that night; they had gained at Kumanovo the first pitched battle of the war, and it had been a famous victory.

CHAPTER IV.

MACEDONIA—1912.

MACEDONIA is a tangle of mountains, whose higher levels are often bare and rocky; the intervening valleys are fertile, and, in some cases, sufficiently extensive to be described as plains. These plains are the granaries of Macedonia, and contain the larger towns like Skoplje and Monastir, their population consists of peasants and farmers representing all the Balkan races, mingled with these, and living by their toil, are traders of almost every nationality. The scenery is wild and picturesque by turns, good roads are few and far between, they link the plains, which lie like oases in a wilderness of mountains, spaces of white, brown, green or yellow, according to the season.

The victory of the Serbs at Kumanovo had been decisive, it had settled the fate of Northern Macedonia. Similar success had attended the operations in Northern Albania, where the Turks had abandoned their positions and were falling back on Scutari, pursued by the 3rd Servian Army advancing westward to the Adriatic. After a short delay at Skoplje, devoted to the reorganisation of the 1st and 2nd Armies, the Serbs continued their offensive towards Southern Macedonia; the bulk of their available forces, under the command of the Crown Prince, moved south in the direction of Monastir, while a detachment of all arms descended the Vardar Valley, its objective being Salonika.

These dispositions were dictated by sound strategy, which, for the moment, and quite justifiably, overrode all political considerations. The enemy's Field Army in Macedonia had to be found and beaten; the remnants of that army were rallying for the defence of a second Plevna, covering the richest inland town in Macedonia, situated west of the Vardar Valley, and joined with Salonika by a railway. At this period, so far as I could judge, the Serbs were acting as loyal allies. The fact that no Bulgars were participating in the operations could be explained on administrative grounds.

I decided to remain with the Crown Prince's reconstituted army, and arrived at his headquarters in the middle of November; they were established at Prilip, a prosperous little town situated at the northern extremity of the plain of Monastir. Winter had already set in, rain was falling on the plain, and snow lay on the hills.

A lodging had been provided for me in a peasant's house, whose spotless cleanliness was most reassuring. In this small dwelling were crowded the representatives of Great Britain, France, Russia and Italy, with a Servian officer as guide and interpreter, the owner of the house was absent with the armies, his wife both cooked and served our meals. I asked the Servian officer of what race she was. He replied, "Oh, she is a Bulgar, there are a few Bulgarian farmers in this district."

At Servian Headquarters the situation was discussed with a frankness which had been lacking while the Austro-Hungarian Military Attaché was present. Everyone agreed that the task before the Servian Army was one of unusual difficulty. The Turkish forces were still numerous, they disposed of excellent communications with Salonika, and the position they occupied was of great natural strength. The Serbs,

on the other hand, were far from their base, the roads connecting Prilip with the railway were almost impassable for heavy wheeled vehicles, and the train service with Servia was irregular and inefficient. Fortunately, the inhabitants of Prilip had come to the rescue by supplying the troops with 30,000 loaves of bread daily.

The spirit of the Servian soldiers was still excellent, they were flushed with victory and confident of success; but they had slaked their passion for revenge, their thoughts were with their families and homes, to which they expected to return so soon as this next and last battle should have been fought and won.

A change had taken place in the mood of the Russian Military Attaché; he seemed pre-occupied, and had made himself unpopular at Servian Headquarters by urging the inclusion of Bulgarian forces for the attack on Monastir. This suggestion had first been made at Skoplje, and had met with a flat refusal; it was renewed at Prilip when the inhabitants agreed to supply the troops with bread. Incensed by a second refusal, the Russian so far forgot his diplomatic self as to state in public that such conduct on the part of the Serbs was idiotic, in view of the fact that the great majority of the population of the town and district were Bulgars. I asked him to which town he referred, "Monastir or Prilip," he replied, "both." A sidelight was now being cast on the contents of the "Secret Treaty," already an inkling could be gained of the troubles that were to come.

Two roads lead south from Prilip. One traverses the plain throughout its length, the other skirts its eastern boundary, following the left bank of the Cerna, a tributary of the Vardar. The Serbs advanced by both these roads, the main body debouched upon the plain, while a detachment took the river route, a metalled road built on swampy ground between the

Cerna and a range of lofty mountains. Snow had fallen during the night preceding this advance, and when day broke billows of mist obscured the Cerna's course and blotted out the hills beyond. At the southern limit of the plain a ridge, covered with new-fallen snow, screened from our view the town of Monastir; this ridge was the Turkish position, which faced almost due north with its right flank resting on the Cerna; the river had overflowed its banks and caused a widespread inundation. The left flank terminated in a cluster of foothills between the northern end of Lake Prespa and Monastir; the nature of the country and the absence of roads protected this flank from a turning movement. For two days the Serbs wasted their energies in frontal attacks against this carefully prepared position; each assault broke like a wave on the barbed-wire entanglements which covered the Turkish trenches. For the first time the Servian infantry had been checked, and a feeling akin to dismay was spreading in their ranks; it seemed impossible to scale that ridge, behind which nestled Monastir, invisible and unattainable. Success now depended on the action of the detachment on the Cerna road. Here the Turks had committed a serious error, the extensive inundations on their right flank had led them to believe that it was inaccessible, and they allowed the Serbs to advance, practically unopposed, along the river as far as Novak, a village on the left bank, situated due east of Monastir, and connected with it by a built-up chaussée. The error consisted in under-estimating the qualities of the peasants and fishermen of Servia, men inured from their youth to hardships and exposure, to whom few natural obstacles are insurmountable. Another factor supervened—the factor of morale. Over their comrades on the plain the troops of Novak had one great advantage—they could see the town lying behind the snow-clad ridge.

War is a pilgrimage for simple soldiers, long days of marching, longer nights of vigil; they know not where they go, nor why—until the day of battle; if then they see the goal they fight with stronger purpose, and knowledge born of vision casts out their doubts and fears. So it was with the Serbs that day at Novak; they looked across a waste of water and saw before them Monastir—the Mecca of their pilgrimage; the sight inspired these humble pilgrims, they set their faces to the west, entered the icy flood, crossed it unflinchingly, and by this bold manœuvre snatched victory from defeat.

By the evening of the third day of battle the right flank of the Turkish position had been turned, the Turks had abandoned their positions north of Monastir, and had effected their retreat into the mountains of Albania. Greek cavalry arrived at Florina (a town on the Monastir-Salonika railway) during the course of the battle, but took no part in the fighting. A Bulgarian column, descending the Struma Valley, had already reached the Rupel Pass, where the mountains merge into the coastal plain. For all practical purposes the Balkan Allies were masters of Macedonia; Greek, Bulgarian and Servian forces were converging on Salonika, whose fall was imminent.

On November 20, two days after the capture of Monastir, the 3rd Servian Army, in co-operation with the Montenegrins, captured Alessic, and thus gained access to the Adriatic seaboard. So far as Serbia was concerned little remained to be done, old Serbia had been reconquered, an outlet to the sea had been acquired. Serbia, the State, had more than gained her object; Serbia, the Ally, the Member of the Balkan League, was at the parting of the ways. Under the terms of the Secret Treaty Monastir passed into Bulgaria's sphere of influence. This Macedonian town, if held as one of the fruits of Serbia's victory, was

bound to become an apple of discord. Every thinking man in Serbia knew it, but knowledge is not always power.

The Prime Minister of Serbia in 1912 was M. Pasitch, already a veteran among Balkan statesmen, and a man of patriarchal mien. The enemies of M. Pasitch said that his long, white beard had made his reputation as a statesman; his friends deplored an accent which was not purely Servian, he had been born at Pirot, on the Bulgarian frontier, where languages, races and politics were apt to get somewhat mixed. To foreigners M. Pasitch was a man of mystery, who spoke French badly, German rather better, and dealt in platitudes. Yet, beyond doubt, he was one of Serbia's great old men, with or without his beard. King Peter, weighed down by age and suffering, had left to him the cares of State, and he had borne the heat and burden of the day unruffled by abuse or calumny. At times he was pathetic as, for example, when he said that the worst enemies of his country and himself were those he tried to rule. These words conveyed a bitter truth. M. Pasitch was a Servian institution, a Nestor in the Council, but, like most Balkan politicians, only retained office by submission to forces independent of the Government. The foreign policy of Serbia was dictated by M. Hartwig, the Russian Minister, and a diplomat of conspicuous ability; within certain limits this arrangement worked well, however galling it may have been to citizens of a sovereign State. Serbia's internal affairs were at the mercy of factions and secret societies; of these the most influential was a society known as the "Black Hand," which included among its members some of the ablest men in the country, whose patriotism was beyond dispute, but who had all the vices of their virtues. The very qualities which had made them fight so well fostered a spirit of unreasonableness;

they mistook moderation for lack of zeal and prudence for timidity, in their eyes it was statesmanship to give free rein to the unbridled appetites of ignorant, short-sighted men intoxicated by success.

In an evil hour for Serbia a combination of these outside forces directed Servian policy in regard to Monastir. The attitude of the Serbs was at least comprehensible, they could urge their sacrifices and the rights of conquest, that of M. Hartwig was inexplicable. This man knew the contents of the Secret Treaty, on which was based the Balkan League, and by which Serbia renounced all claims to Monastir. He could not have ignored Bulgarian sentiment in Macedonia, nor the statistics of the population; yet he—a chief creator of the Balkan Bloc, an ardent Slav, a clever, gifted man, steeped in the politics of Central Europe—connived at denunciation of the Secret Treaty within a few months of its signature.

Interference by the Great Powers in Balkan affairs has always been disastrous, because it has been selfish: M. Hartwig may have considered the Serbs as little brothers, but he used them as an advanced guard of Pan-Slavism without regard for their real interests or preparedness for the task. Like the Russian Military Attaché, he thought that the victories of Kumanovo and Monastir had brought about "la liquidation de l'Autriche," and that in future Russia alone would control the Balkan situation. He was wrong, and his and Serbia's mistaken policy gave Austria-Hungary her opportunity.

The reaction of policy in strategy soon became manifest. In spite of the fact that a Turkish Army, led by Djavid Pasha (the best of Turkey's generals), was still in being, all active operations were suspended, and the Servian forces were distributed throughout the conquered territory and became an army of occupation. Monastir, renamed Bitolja, was held by a garrison con-

sisting exclusively of Serbs, the civil administration was taken over by Servian officials.

Monastir had become a part of Servia, and a very unhappy part at that; the reasons were not far to seek—the population was not Servian, 78* per cent. of the inhabitants of the vilayet were Bulgars, and of the rest only a small proportion were Serbs. Ruthless repression of every institution or business which did not profess a Servian origin only served to embitter popular feeling, and reveal the real facts of the situation. Ignorance of the Servian language was counted as a crime; publicans and other comparatively innocuous traders were flogged for infringing decrees, published in Servian, which they could not understand. Twelve lashes applied by an athletic gendarme are, no doubt, a powerful incentive to learning foreign languages, but many residents so mistrusted their linguistic talents that, rather than face a second lesson, they left their homes, preferring the lot of refugees to tyranny and persecution. Monastir was a town in torment, lamentations resounded in the Consulates of all the Great Powers, the publicans were not alone in regretting the departure of the backward but tolerant Turk.

In the army of occupation, although discipline was strictly maintained, a revulsion of feeling had taken place. The poor in every Balkan State were suffering, as they always do, on them had fallen the burden of the war, shorn of its bloody splendour. The misery in Macedonia sickened the Servian peasants, they feared for their own homes, and deserted in large numbers. Armies are not machines, they are dynamic bodies whose health depends on action, kept stationary amid a strife of tongues they melt away.

* Turkish statistics: There is good reason to believe that these figures were approximately correct; it is most improbable, in any case, that the Turks would have exaggerated the number of Bulgars in this vilayet.

The Greeks had won the race for Salonika without much bloodshed, it was said that the Turkish military governor had sold the town for 300,000 francs. The Bulgars arrived a few hours after the triumphal entry of the Greek troops. They were received coldly, like unwelcome visitors. The Serbs were greeted more cordially, but as guests rather than Allies.

At all Ægean ports the sea breezes compete unsuccessfully with unsavoury odours, resulting from insanitary conditions, dried fish and garlic; Salonika was no exception to the rule, but at the time of my arrival the moral atmosphere was even more unwholesome. Greeks, Serbs and Bulgars jostled each other in the narrow streets, proclaiming by their presence the downfall of Turkish rule in Macedonia. Yet, though success was sweet, its aftermath had turned to bitterness. Something had been smashed, something they had all feared and hated; and now they were face to face with one another, the broken pieces in their hands, themselves a prey to envy, greed, and, worst of all, uncertainty. The Balkan Allies were writhing in the net of an alliance concluded secretly, its clauses were known only to a chosen few, who dared not tell the truth. Each nation had its version of the Treaty, twisting the facts to suit its special interests. Brawls occurred daily in the streets between the Allied soldiers, their leaders wrangled in hotels. Many wealthy Turks had remained, they wore the look of men who, if not over-honest, still hoped, when the thieves fell out, to come into their own again.

Greece claimed Salonika on the ground of prior occupation; Bulgaria demanded that the port and its hinterland should be under the same administration, or, in other words, her own; Servia had no direct interest in Salonika, but clung doggedly to Monastir, in spite of the Treaty.

The Greek and Bulgarian Governments then in power were anxious to reach a settlement, but neither Government dared abate its claims; public opinion in both Greece and Bulgaria was supposed to be against concessions, because some organs of the Press had said it was so. A curious illusion this, though prevalent in every country. In the Balkans many important papers were subsidised with foreign money, yet still were believed to voice the views of peasants who could neither read nor write.

Colonel G.— P.—, while discussing the possibility of obtaining ammunition from the Western Powers through Salonika, had suggested that the port should be internationalised. This was, of course, the only practical solution of the problem; but coming from a Serb it would have had more weight if it had been accompanied by a promise to surrender Monastir. Unfortunately, no such surrender, either immediate or prospective, was within the sphere of practical politics. M. Gueshoff, the Bulgarian Prime Minister, went so far as to offer to leave the town and a part of Macedonia to the Serbs until Servian aspirations in other directions should have been gratified. An agreement to this effect was reached during a private meeting with M. Pasitch, but it came to naught; neither Prime Minister could control the sinister forces which worked like a poisonous leaven in their countries, and were rapidly wrecking the Balkan "Bloc."

By the middle of December, 1912, it had become evident that no peaceful settlement of the Macedonian question was possible if the Balkan States were left to their own devices. Collective intervention by the Great Powers was precluded by the attitude of at least three among them who were deliberately exploiting the rivalry of the Balkan Allies, and hoped to fish in troubled waters.

In the Bay of Salonika a British warship lay at anchor, a symbol of the Armada whose tentacles were on every sea, but a symbol and nothing more. To the men on shore, some of whom were looking at the sea for the first time, this ship was an object of respect and curiosity; they had heard of Great Britain's habitual gesture when Abdul Hamid became obstreperous, and they may have wondered whether Salonika was not regarded in the same light as Besika* Bay; it may even have occurred to some of them that perhaps the British Government had a policy in the Aegean, where a new situation had arisen, requiring prompt attention from the Mistress of the Seas.

It was then, as it is now, my firm conviction that if, at this critical period, the British and French Governments had sent a Note insisting on Salonika being made an international port, and that if the Note had been supported by the dispatch to Salonika of a squadron of warships, Greece and Bulgaria would have complied. The rulers of the Balkan States would have welcomed such a method of escape from the dilemma in which they found themselves; they knew, none better, how devoid of a comprehensive Macedonian policy they were, how the swift advance of the armies had outstripped their calculations, and what would be the consequences if they failed to reach agreement. The Note would have indicated the course to pursue; the display of force would have justified compliance in the eyes of their own peoples. Objections to this course of action might have been raised by the Central Powers, but they could hardly have made it a *casus belli*, the pretext would have been too flimsy; further, while the Balkan Bloc was still in being a prudent policy was imposed. On

* A bay in the Eastern Mediterranean Coast to which a British squadron was sent whenever it was necessary to put pressure on the Turks.

the other hand, the Russian Government, partly owing to the advocacy of M. Hartwig, and partly from anxiety in regard to the Bulgarian advance towards Constantinople, had become the partisan of Serbia, and was not directly interested in Salonika.

No such step was taken, and a great opportunity was lost. The action of each of the Great Powers was characteristic—the British Government suggested a conference of Balkan representatives in London; French agents, working in the interest of Schneider, secured orders from the Servian Government for guns and ammunition; Italy sent Serbia a warning about the Adriatic; Austria-Hungary began a partial mobilisation. If further proof had been needed, this mobilisation should have convinced the most purblind observers of Austria-Hungary's underlying motives; the veriest tyro in geography must have known that Salonika was more accessible to the fleets than to the armies of the Great Powers; a display of force in Bosnia and Herzegovina could not effect appeasement at Salonika, it could only terrorise the Montenegrins and the Serbs, and at the same time encourage the Turks still left in Europe, to prolong their resistance. Nor did Austro-Hungarian policy overlook the possibilities presented by Bulgaria; the Bulgars, so far, had gained little by the war, the Greeks were at Salonika, and the Serbs at Monastir; they, the Bulgars, had not yet captured Adrianople, and their hearts were filled with bitterness and resentment. After all, they had some cause to grumble, and some excuse for listening to the tempter.

The belligerent States accepted the invitation to confer in London. While the delegates conferred wearied soldiers, immobilised by frost and snow, burrowed in holes like hibernating animals.

I returned to Belgrade for Christmas, 1912. The town was full to overflowing, and, as usual, foreigners,

posing as Balkan experts, did all the talking. The Serbs themselves were feeling the pinch of war, hunger and cold had brought typhus in their train; the angel of death was claiming many victims still.

Walking back from dinner with a journalist who enjoyed a European reputation, I got what my companion called "a peep behind the scenes." It was a most unedifying spectacle, and as remote from reality as the moon, which, sailing high in heaven, lit up that winter night.

In all that concerned the Balkans the Great Powers were in truth *les grandes Impuissances*.* Blinded by ignorance, greed and prejudice, they were laying the foundations of a pyramid, whose blocks would be errors piled on errors through seven succeeding years. The Great Powers were the master-builders, and the Balkan States their pupils. Apt pupils these, ready to learn and accustomed to obey. The lessons given and received were base, unworthy and a negation of all moral sense.

To anyone who knew and faced the facts the situation had the elements of a Greek tragedy. The Balkan experts had played the part of a Bacchanalian chorus and created a suitable atmosphere. The first act was completed, its stage a little known, romantic land, to many a land of promise. One wondered whether the cast was yet complete, and what new players might be added. Ruthlessly, logically and inevitably the climax would be reached. But where and how? No one could then foresee.

* "The Great Powerless."

CHAPTER V.

ALBANIA—1912-1913.

AFTER the victory at Kumanovo, as already mentioned, the 3rd Servian Army marched westwards into Albania. The northern part of this Turkish province had a special value in Servian eyes. It included the so-called Adriatic ports—Durazzo and San Giovanni di Medua.

Colonel G—— P—— had given me some idea of the hatred felt by his countrymen for Albanians generally. The misgivings aroused at Belgrade by his reference to this subject were more than confirmed by the conduct of the Albanian campaign. No detailed narrative of these operations has been obtained, but the fragmentary reports received, both from neutrals and belligerents, left no doubt as to the atrocities which accompanied and stained indelibly the heroism and endurance of the Servian soldiers. Whole villages were wiped out, old men, women and children were either slaughtered in their homes or driven forth to die of cold and famine, the countryside was wasted, an orgy of wanton destruction was permitted, if not encouraged, by the Servian Staff. As the army penetrated more deeply into the mountains, fresh horrors were added; winter set in, the passes became blocked with ice and snow, men and animals fell from slippery tracks into abysses, disease and insanity were rife, a line of corpses marked the passage of the army. Numbers dwindled rapidly; only the strongest survived; stragglers were left to die in awful solitudes. The Albanian peasants, aided by the Turks, defended their mountains step by step; bands of them hovered

round the line of march, seeking a chance for grim reprisals. Quarter was neither asked nor given; men fought like barbarians with a veneer of science, which made their actions doubly hideous. Episodes described by competent and impartial observers leave an impression as painful as it is confusing; nothing more terrible has taken place in any part of the world, or in the whole history of war.

Servian activities in Albania provoked a protest on the part of two of the Great Powers, but not on humanitarian grounds. From both Vienna and Rome there came a note of warning: "Ne touchez pas* l'Adriatique" was the purport of the message. The attitude of the Austro-Hungarian and Italian Governments was frankly interested; it was that of a big dog who sees a terrier gnawing a bone within tempting reach of it's (the big dog's) kennel. This prohibition was not to be lightly disregarded, but the Government at Belgrade showed unexpected firmness. Strong in their faith in Russia and in M. Hartwig, the Serbs continued to advance. After a month of ceaseless struggle against Turks, Albanians, the elements and nature, this vanguard of Pan-Slavism in the Balkans came within sight of the forbidden coast, between Alessio and Durazzo. The soldiers raised a shout of exultation. Behind them lay a barrier of mountains, impassable in winter; before them was the sea, to reach whose shores they had endured and risked so much. Some troopers galloped quickly to the beach and spurred their famished horses into the sparkling water, and when they found it was not fit to drink they murmured helplessly. The men of Servia proper, unlike their kinsmen of Dalmatia, had not the habit of the sea; for them it still remained a mystery, pregnant with disillusionment both present and to come.

* "Don't touch the Adriatic."

The Turks had withdrawn the bulk of their forces to Scutari and the Serbs occupied Alessio without encountering serious opposition. This ancient town is situated at the junction of the new road from the coast at San Giovanni di Medua with the main road connecting Durazzo and Scutari. It formed, in consequence, an admirable base for future operations. For the time being, however, the 3rd Servian Army was incapable of further efforts; the troops were exhausted, supplies and ammunition were scarce, boots for the men and shoes for the horses were alike lacking, and until sea communications with Servia through Salonika could be established a continuance of the offensive was impossible. Unfortunately, the confusion which reigned at Salonika prevented the immediate despatch of supplies and reinforcements to San Giovanni di Medua; the army was immobilised by force of circumstances and degenerated into an army of occupation, holding a strip of territory between the mountains and the sea.

The invasion of Albania had been undertaken prematurely and in a spirit of exaggerated optimism; impatience and want of foresight had rendered fruitless an achievement which, however marred by atrocities, was a splendid feat of arms. Servia's position in Albania became more precarious with every day that passed in inactivity. The key of the situation was Scutari. While that fortress remained in Turkish hands, conquest was incomplete, and at any moment one or more of the Great Powers might intervene; already there were indications that the Dual Monarchy* was losing patience and fretting against a policy which kept the ring.

Alessio is noted as the burial place of Scanderbeg, an Albanian chieftain and son of a Servian princess.

* Austria-Hungary.

During the 15th century he had waged war against the Turks for over twenty years; his name was a household word in Servia, as that of one who had fought a common foe. Time had wrought many changes since those days. The narrow streets around the hero's tomb were thronged by an invading host of Serbs, with devastation in their track, their hands imbrued with Albanian peasants' blood. An evil genius seemed to possess the Servian leaders. The war, no more a war of liberation, had loosed their basest passions; success had made them cruel, vindictive and tyrannical, the very faults for which they blamed the Turks.

As Bacon says: "Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes." While Servia groaned beneath the Turkish yoke, cycles of songs had fortified her faith and poetised defeat. Only a "Hymn of Hate" could chronicle this victory—a fierce lament, resounding through a land of desolation, echoing a people's cries of woe.

Winter passed without any active protest on the part of the Great Powers in regard to the presence of Servian troops in Northern Albania. In the early part of February, the Young Turks, under the leadership of Enver Pasha, broke off the peace negotiations in London, and hostilities recommenced in Thrace and Albania. Macedonia was clear of Turks and, from a purely Servian point of view, the only remaining military operation was the capture of Scutari. The troops on the spot were unequal to the task, and the Servian Government decided on the despatch of reinforcements, by sea, to San Giovanni di Medua. Time pressed. The Serbs had learned at the London Conference that a *fait accompli** was a better basis for bargaining with their Allies and the Great Powers than

* "An accomplished fact."

the most righteous cause; they feared that, at an early date, a second armistice might be imposed upon them, and they were determined to, if possible, attend the next conference masters of Scutari and the adjacent coast.

The organisation of the expeditionary force was completed rapidly and efficiently, and by the end of February the Servian troops were concentrated at Salonika. Unfortunately for the Serbs, they were dependent on their Greek allies for overseas transport and a naval escort. The intentions of the Greek Government may have been excellent, but their administrative services left much to be desired. It was not until March 17 that the fleet of transports steamed out of Salonika harbour; at least 14 days had been wasted in vexatious, and in some cases unnecessary, delays.

The ships were overcrowded to an extent which would hardly have been justified if the voyage had been made in time of peace, when it would have lasted only four or five days; in time of war, and more especially in view of the recent activity of the Turkish cruiser Hamidieh, a prolongation of the voyage should have been allowed for and suitable arrangements made; they were not, and once again the soldiers had to suffer for the optimism of the Headquarter Staff. In point of fact the Hamidieh was never within 1,000 miles of the Adriatic, but its name inspired dread, and the transports dared not move without an escort of Greek warships. At the last moment these were not forthcoming, owing to the occurrence of a naval display at the Piræus, on the occasion of the funeral of King George of Greece, who had been assassinated a few days earlier in the streets of Salonika. Twelve precious days were spent between the Ægean and the Gulf of Corinth. The convoy reached the Ionian Sea and anchored off San Giovanni di Medua after a

journey lasting 17 days. So long a voyage in crowded, insanitary transports had its inevitable result; typhus had broken out among the troops, many men were buried at sea, the horses and oxen suffered terribly; some had been embarked a fortnight before we left Salonika. Without firing a shot the Servian Expeditionary Force had lost much of its fighting value, mainly through the muddling of the military and naval staffs. War is at all times wasteful. When Allied States share in an enterprise, officials speak in many tongues, their jealousies are national as well as personal, the waste is augmented out of all proportion to the results achieved.

As we approached our moorings at San Giovanni di Medua, I was standing on the bridge of the flagship with Colonel G—— P——. After looking through his field glasses at the coastline for some minutes, he turned to me with the laconic remark, "Dasz ist ein groszes nichts."* No better description could have been made in words.

Lying before us was a bay, sheltered from the north by a low headland, below which could be seen a sandy beach with two jetties; to the east of the beach was the mouth of the River Drin; from here the coastline ran in a southerly direction and was fringed by mangroves. The only human habitations in sight were two houses on the headland, and in the distance, about six miles away, Alessio. Stranded on the beach were two Greek steamers, victims of the Hamidieh. San Giovanni di Medua was not a port, it was an open roadstead, affording no shelter from a south-west wind.

The reinforcements sent by sea brought the total number of Servian combatants in Albania up to 23,000 of all arms, with a good proportion of artillery. At this stage of the war, and taking into consideration the jealousies which divided the Turkish commanders,

* That is a big nothing.

a force of such size and composition had Scutari at its mercy. One determined assault would have brought about the fall of the fortress. For reasons which have never been explained, the Servian General, who directed also the operations of the Montenegrin Army, continually postponed the day for the assault. This procrastination was destined to have disastrous consequences.

Nearly three weeks had passed since the landing when, one evening at dinner time, I was informed that the general assault would take place at dawn on the following day. The infantry and guns were already in their advanced positions, and everyone was confident of success. Towards the end of the meal a Servian Staff Officer entered with a message for Colonel G—— P——, who, after reading it, leaned across me and addressed the General. Both men seemed agitated, and left the tent together. A few minutes later I was asked to join them. A curious document was put before me. It was signed by a British admiral, who described himself as the commander of an international squadron of warships, anchored at the time of writing off San Giovanni di Medua. There was nothing ambiguous about this document. It was a formal order to the Servian General to withdraw his forces from the neighbourhood of Scutari and bring them back to the coast; no diplomatic verbiage was employed and no explanations were given.

The first effect of this amazing communication on the two Servian officers was stupefaction, which soon gave way to strong resentment. They, not unnaturally, considered such treatment as an affront to the sovereignty of their country and a flagrant breach of neutrality. They found some consolation, however, in the fact that a British admiral had signed. It gave them a sense of security, so they said. Everywhere

in the Balkans one found this sentiment towards the British. It touched the heart and flattered pride of race; one tried to forget the ignorance and detachment of the British Government, to justify this simple trust and to be 'worthy of it. The signature was not very legible, but the name was already sufficiently well known for me to recognise it as Cecil Burney.

No steps were taken to countermand the assault, which would undoubtedly have taken place had not a telegram arrived at midnight, from Belgrade, containing full instructions as to the future conduct of the Servian forces in Albania. The withdrawal of all troops to the sea coast, whence they had come, was to be absolute and immediate; advanced posts were to be withdrawn under cover of darkness, to minimise the risk of rearguard actions with the enemy. On arrival at San Giovanni di Medua, preparations were to be made at once to re-embark the troops on specially provided transports, already on their way from Salonika.

The Serbs marched back to the coast bursting with anger and despair. All their hardships and sufferings had been endured in vain. Coming down the valley towards the beach they saw before them a great array of warships, flying the flags of six Great Powers, and learned another bitter lesson. The sea was not for them—not yet at least. A swift reaction followed. The force that daunted them was force afloat, on land they held themselves invincible, and asked for nothing better than to return to Macedonia, to conquests nearer to their hearts and homes; to mountains and inland plains where water was not salt, where men and animals were not cooped up in stifling holds, and did not have their stomachs turned by the uneasy movement of the sea.

They thought they had been tricked, and from this mood a frame of mind emerged which brooked no

compromise at Monastir. The "Black Hand" society got many new adherents from the Servian Army in Albania during these fateful days. Made bitter by helplessness and disappointment, these men believed that that society alone stood up for Servia's rights, and so they joined the ranks of the enemies of peace.

Colonel G—— P—— looked grey and haggard; this termination of an enterprise of which he had been the principal organiser was a set-back in his career, but to all personal considerations he was indifferent. The causes of this sudden display of energy on the part of the Great Powers did, however, give him food for anxious reflection. He saw the handiwork of Austria-Hungary, and said bitterly: "Albania is a small country but it contains three races and four religions. There is only one way of maintaining peace here, and that is by dividing this country between Servia and Greece. At the beginning it would be hard, but no harder for the Albanians than when they were under the Turks, from whom we have liberated them. Austria wants an autonomous Albania, though she knows it is an absurdity, because she does not want peace in the Balkans, except on her own terms. Great Britain and France are helping Austria—God knows why! What do your people know about Albania?" He pointed to the warships in the bay and added: "To-day is the first birthday of autonomous Albania; it is a bad day for all the Balkan States."

I thought of that suburb in Berlin where there was one bank too many, and then of a Conference of Ambassadors in London, called to resolve the Albanian riddle. Burian* would be there as well as Mensdorff.†

* Baron Burian, afterwards Count Burian, a prominent Austro-Hungarian diplomat both before and during the war.

† Count Albert Mensdorff, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador in London for 15 years.

Austria would speak with no uncertain voice. If the British Government had a policy in Albania, it was surely an Austrian policy. A division of Albania between Serbia and Greece was the logical outcome of the Balkan War of 1912; it might have been effected under the control of the Great Powers and guarantees could have been exacted for the protection of the different nationalities. Far harder questions have been dealt with on these lines, since the expulsion of the Serbs from the Albanian coast.

CHAPTER VI.

THE SECOND BALKAN WAR AND THE TREATY OF BUCHAREST.

IN April, 1913, representatives of the Balkan States were summoned, for the second time, to Great Britain, and once again the negotiations threatened to drag on interminably. They were cut short, however, by Sir Edward Grey, who had lost patience with the procrastinating methods of the delegates, and a treaty was signed, known as the "Peace of London."

So ended the first Balkan War. Turkey lost all her territory in Europe except Turkish Thrace, which served as a hinterland to Constantinople; Bulgaria acquired Adrianople and Dede Agatch as her share of the spoil; the Greeks retained Salonika and Cavalla; the Serbs still occupied Monastir; Albania was declared an autonomous kingdom, whose frontiers were to be delimited under the direction of an Ambassadors' Conference in London, while an International Commission assisted the local Government, pending the appointment of a King.

The Peace Treaty registered the defeat of Turkey; it did little more, and was merely a rough and ready attempt to reconcile the conflicting aims and aspirations of the victors. Rumania added fresh complications by demanding compensation from Bulgaria for having played a neutral part during a Balkan War. Another conference of Ambassadors was assembled in Petrograd to arbitrate upon this point.

The Bulgarian delegate in London had been M. Daneff, a rude, overbearing Macedonian who incensed

and irritated all those with whom he came in contact. The selection of this man for so delicate a mission was, to say the least, unfortunate. To many it appeared suspicious that M. Daneff should have been sent, when M. Gueshoff, the Prime Minister, and a man of reasonable and moderate views, could have gone in his place; it looked as if King Ferdinand of Bulgaria had already become entangled in the meshes of Austro-Hungarian diplomacy, whose object was the disruption of the Balkan League. M. Daneff rejected the overtures and proposals of Greeks, Serbs, Rumanians and Turks with equal contempt. As a result, Bulgaria became more and more isolated. Potential enemies surrounded her on every side, but, blinded by arrogance and false counsel, she disdained the alliance of any neighbouring State.

At the end of June, the storm broke. The signature of peace had enabled the Bulgarian Government to concentrate troops in Eastern Macedonia, in close proximity to the Servian army of occupation. The soldiers of the two armies fraternised with one another and, to all appearances, the Bulgars had the friendliest intentions. The first act of war took place before dawn on June 30 when, without warning, the Servian outpost line was attacked and driven in by a numerically superior force of Bulgars. The Serbs recovered themselves speedily, reinforcements were hurried to the front attacked, and a counter-attack was made which drove the Bulgars in confusion from the field. Servian successes had an immediate effect on the Government at Sofia. The treacherous offensive of June 30 was repudiated and ascribed to the personal initiative of General Savoff, one of Bulgaria's most notorious "men of action" and a favourite of the King. The repudiation came too late. All the other Balkan States combined against Bulgaria, and within

three months of the signing of peace in London, Greeks and Serbs were fighting their late ally in Macedonia, while Turks and Rumanians invaded her territory from the east and north.

The Bulgars soon found themselves in a desperate plight; no amount of stubborn valour at Carevoselo* could protect Sofia against the Rumanians or save Adrianople from the Turks. By the end of July the Bulgarian Government was forced to sue for an armistice to save their country from utter ruin. The day of reckoning had come for an inexcusable and odious crime.

In the first week of August, the delegates of the Balkan States assembled at Bucharest to negotiate yet another peace. Their task was not an easy one. Public opinion in Serbia and Greece was exultant and clamouring for vengeance; in Turkey, Enver Pasha, the saviour of Adrianople, was at the zenith of his fame. From elements such as these a judicial frame of mind was not to be expected; they were blinded by hatred, pent up through decades of jealousy and fear. Enver cherished ambitious dreams, counted on German help, and knew no scruples; the majority of the Greeks and Serbs aimed at reducing Bulgaria to a state of impotence. Had it been possible, they would have exterminated the entire race.

A few courageous voices were raised in protest against a too brutal application of the principle that every country has the government it deserves; they declared it a crime to visit the sins of the rulers on their hapless subjects; they claimed that the Bulgarian people, as distinct from their rulers, had been punished enough already; that Bulgaria had been bled white.

* A place close to and just outside the S.-W. frontier of Bulgaria, where the Bulgars resisted the combined attacks of the Servian and Greek armies for 14 days.

and had made many sacrifices in a common cause; that she had lost much of her power for evil," and might, if properly handled, lose the will; they pleaded that justice should be tempered with common sense, if not with mercy, and urged that the folly of exasperating millions of virile peasants, and thereby driving them into closer union with the Central Empires, against all their racial instincts, should be foreseen and checked.

The men who dared to speak with the voice of reason were called pro-Bulgars in Greece and Servia; they went to Bucharest, hoping to find a more objective spirit.

Many factors combined to make the Rumanian capital the most suitable meeting-place for the Balkan delegates on this momentous occasion. Rumania had struck the decisive blow without bloodshed; her army was intact and her treasury was not depleted; her territorial claims were inconsiderable and had been submitted to the Great Powers for arbitration; lastly, in her King Rumania possessed a personage peculiarly fitted to mould and direct, dispassionately, the proceedings of the Conference.

King Charles was a man advanced in years who had served his adopted country both faithfully and well. The Rumanian people felt for him gratitude and respect. At this period they would have followed loyally in any course he chose to take. As head of the elder and Catholic branch of the Hohenzollern family, the King of Rumania was in close touch with the courts of the Central Empires and with King Constantine of Greece.

In short, fate had conferred on this Hohenzollern prince unrivalled authority in his own country, access to powerful channels of persuasion, and in relation to

the other Balkan States, forces sufficient to impose his will. He could, had he willed, have been arbiter of the Balkans and might have changed the course of history. In the event, he preferred to stand aside.

History is full of such "might have beens." Time is a kind of fourth dimension affecting every human action. King Charles's opportunity occurred when he was old and tired. Made over-cautious by his knowledge of the play of external forces on the Balkan situation, he feared a general conflagration, which might consume his life's work at a stroke; and so he left ill alone, and hoped to end his days in peace.

Probably the best known of King Charles's ministers in 1912 was M. Take Jonescu, whose tireless energy in the cultivation of relationships and souvenirs in foreign capitals had earned for him the title of "the Great European." This title was not undeserved, though applied ironically in nine cases out of ten. M. Take Jonescu had acquired the habit of generalising from Rumanian affairs so as to make them embrace the whole of the old world and the new; this had enlarged his horizon and given him a vision which at times was startlingly prophetic. He recognised more clearly than any of his countrymen the rôle of Rumania at the Conference and what could and should be done. The restless, versatile man of the people was fascinated by the splendid possibilities of a bold and imaginative Rumanian policy. Not so his colleagues of the Conservative Party; they opposed inertia to ideas, and behind them stood the King. M. Take Jonescu had a lawyer's training and was no champion of lost causes. This cause was lost indeed while King Charles was on the throne; only a cataclysm could have saved it—a "Cascade des Trônes."* The Rumanian statesman foresaw, and

* "A Cascade of Thrones." The title of a series of articles published by M. Take Jonescu in 1915.

in his vaguely anarchic fashion wished for this consummation, about which he was to write a few years later, but the lawyer threw up his brief and devoted his undoubted talents to bargaining and the conclusion of a Treaty which King Charles himself described as a "drum-head truce." In the Near East, men have a passion for subtle and tortuous negotiations, which are comprehended in the phrase "un marchandage Balkanique," which end in compromises, effect no settlement, and serve to postpone the evil day.

The Austro-Hungarian representative in Bucharest must have heaved a sigh of relief when it became clear that Rumania's participation in the Conference would be restricted to land-grabbing in the Dobruja.* Silistria and a district from which one of the best Bulgarian infantry regiments drew its recruits were claimed, and eventually annexed, by Rumania. No great extent of territory this; but enough to hurt.

The French and British press, skimming lightly on the surface of the Conference, dealt with personalities in preference to principles. M. Venizelos was their favourite delegate, and held that position to the end. Success in any walk of life is profitable; success in rebellion is the shortest road to fame. M. Venizelos had begun his career as a Cretan rebel. In 1913 he shared with King Constantine the honours of two victorious campaigns in Macedonia, and was credited with the resurrection of the old Hellenic spirit. At Bucharest this remarkable man was in a difficult position; his sole rival in the affections of the Greek people was his sovereign, to whom he owed the allegiance of a subject and with whom his personal relations were far from cordial. The considered judgments of M. Venizelos favoured concessions to

* "Balkan haggling."

† See map.

Bulgaria in regard to Cavalla and its hinterland; to any such suggestions the King replied with a categorical refusal. Fearful of forfeiting popularity by any act which would diminish the aggrandisements of Greece, M. Venizelos was perpetually balancing between his conception of Balkan statesmanship and concern for his own reputation. Eventually, the latter gained the day. Cavalla was retained by Greece and another bone of contention was created between Greeks and Bulgars. The presence of Servian and Turkish delegates at Bucharest was purely formal. Like the daughters of the horse-leech, their cry was—give; to have given them more than what they had already taken would have brought on another war, and no one was prepared for that. Servia's retention of Monastir was sanctioned, the Turks remained at Adrianople. The Bulgars, crestfallen and daunted for a time, retained a part of Thrace, including Dede Agatch and Porto Lagos; they were alone and friendless; the sympathies of Russia, the one-time liberator, had been estranged. They turned their eyes, reluctantly, towards the Central Empires and nursed a fell revenge. •

In due course, the Treaty of Bucharest was signed by the contracting parties. It has never been officially recognised by the Great Powers, yet by many it is accepted as a basis for future readjustments in the Balkan Peninsula. Fallacies are of rapid growth, they none the less die hard. The negotiations had been, in fact, a diplomatic duel between Russia and Austria-Hungary, the first clash between two mighty movements—the “*Drang nach Osten*”* and Pan-Slavism. Austria-Hungary had won. The new frontiers were a triumph for her diplomacy. Servia, though victorious, was enclosed as in a net; on the East

* “The Thrust to the East.”

an irreconcilable Bulgaria; on the West, Albania torn by internal discord, and fast becoming an outpost of the Central Empires; on the South Greece, where German influence was daily gaining ground. Killed by its authors the Balkan "Bloc" was dead; a new element had been introduced into the balance of power in Europe, Servia and Bulgaria were doubtful States no longer, they were in opposite camps, and, when the lassitude caused by two cruel wars had passed, they could be set at each other's throats again to fight for interests not their own.

Great Britain had held aloof from the proceedings of the Conference. Our Minister in Bucharest had received instructions to take neither part nor lot in the negotiations; if called upon for an opinion he was to endorse that of his Russian colleague. If the British Government had any Balkan policy at all it was, apparently, a Russian policy; a vicarious partisanship, an acquiescence in the pernicious doctrine that two wrongs may make a right.

A gaping wound had been made in Europe's side, the surgeons had met together at Bucharest, and fearing to probe had sewn it up with clumsy stitches. Wounds are not healed by surgery such as this, not only do they open up again, their poison spreads, attains some vital organ, and causes death. Good surgery needs knowledge, foresight, courage, the power and will to act. The men, who from ignorance or inertia neglected and dallied with the Balkan problem, were scarcely less guilty than the criminals, who of set purpose, made a peace which sowed the seeds of war.

During the summer of 1913 a spell of intense heat occurred in the fertile plains of the Danube valley; in every village dirt and insanitary conditions encouraged flies, winged insects swarmed by night and day,

revelling in filth and carrying disease. The Rumanian peasants who had marched into Bulgaria had been attacked by a more deadly enemy than the Bulgarian hosts—the cholera microbe pursued them to their homes; the malady assumed an epidemic form and raged at first unchecked.

To some it seemed an act of retribution for an unrighteous peace, a manifestation of stern justice, dubbed divine, although its victims were the innocent and weak. The rich escaped by fleeing to hill stations or the sea, the poor, perforce, remained and died by hundreds, their families were decimated, their fields were left untilled, a blight had fallen on this pleasant land.

In her hour of trial Rumania discovered an unexpected source of strength and consolation. Calamity had called, and from her castle in the mountains an English Princess came, leaving the fragrant coolness of the woods for stifling heat and misery in myriad shape, down in the sun-scorched plain. In every cholera camp her white-clad form was seen moving from tent to tent, bringing the tonic of her beauty, restoring hope, dealing out pity with a lavish hand. To humble folk weighed down by suffering, it was as though an angel passed, and memories cluster still around those days, weaving a web of gratitude and loving kindness, a web to outward seeming, frail and unsubstantial, but unbreakable, surviving all the shocks of war, binding the people to their Queen.

I returned to London through Sofia and Belgrade. After the festivities of Bucharest the aspect of both these Capitals was sad indeed. Victor and vanquished alike were reaping the aftermath of war; bedraggled soldiers thronged the streets, no longer saviours, not even heroes, merely idle citizens, useless until demobilised.

From Belgrade my duties called me to Vienna. As the train crossed the railway bridge to Semlin, I saw again the guns and searchlights on the Save's Hungarian bank. Austria-Hungary had not yet decided on her course of action, but she was ready. The Balkan Allies of 1912 had had their frolic, poor rabbits, they had paused for breath, and now had time to think. No longer Allies, they were helpless puppets, controlled by strings whose ends were held in Petrograd and Vienna. Victims, not wholly innocent, they would crouch and wait; already it seemed as if a Python-State had stirred.

CHAPTER VII.

TWO MEN WHO DIED.

I. FIRST MAN. A SIMPLE SOLDIER.

NEAR Krivolak, in the Vardar Valley, a road strikes westward, joining the railway with the plains lying beyond a wall of mountains. At first, it winds in tortuous fashion, following a streamlet's rocky bed, and, ever rising, leads to a tableland, where other roads are met, and signposts point the way to Monastir.

The Vardar Valley is a rift of gentle beauty in a wild, inhospitable land, the mother of many tributaries coming from east and west. It broadens on its journey to the sea, the plains adjoin and almost touch each other, like glowing pearls strung on a silver thread. One of these plains lies north of Krivolak, and here the valley of the winding stream and road sinks like a lovely child into its mother's lap. The war had made it a Gehenna, where wagons creaked and jolted, and the once silent spaces echoed with moans of pain.

In the main valley, close to the railway station, some tents were grouped around a mast, and from the mast there waved a Red Cross flag. During the hours of darkness a lamp replaced the flag; both served as guide and landmark to the countryside, inviting all who needed help to this outpost of humanity.

Here were received convoys of sick and wounded, some to regain their health and strength, others to join their comrades in the graveyard which grew in size with each succeeding day. They arrived in a lamentable condition, bruised by rough travel in springless wagons, their wounds neglected, and too often gangrened. From them one learned how long

the way had seemed, how from afar their eager, straining eyes had sought the fluttering flag or the red lamp, which marked the bourne where respite would be found after long days and nights of misery.

Amid the scores of human wrecks littering the Red Cross camp one man attracted my especial notice—a young Servian soldier. He lay at full length on a stretcher, and sometimes raised himself to a half-sitting posture, but soon fell back again exhausted by the effort. Both his legs had been shattered by shrapnel below the knees, a blanket concealed them, mercifully he did not know the worst. The surgeon whispered that it was a hopeless case, gangrene was far advanced, the long, well-coupled legs were doomed, only by amputation could his life be saved.

He thanked me for some cigarettes and smiled a boyish smile, showing a row of splendid teeth. His uniform was caked with mud and hung in rags, the muscles rippled on his arms and chest, which, though unwashed, were clean, nature had kept them so.

The war had been a great event for him, he quite ignored its tragic side, and talked of battles and a charge, of how he'd killed a Turk, and then he added: "In a few months I will be well again and fit to fight the Austrians." His home was in the Drina highlands, he had grown up under the shadow of the northern neighbours, and learned to hate them with his mother's milk. Yet still he kept his sunny temperament, the priests who preached race hatred had not destroyed his soul.

Our conversation had a sudden ending. Two orderlies came to take the stretcher and bear it to a tent, the movement made the blanket slip, and once again the soldier raised himself instinctively—saw what was waiting for the surgeon's knife, a mangled mass of splintered bones, torn tendons, rotting flesh, and fell back dead.

Perhaps it was better thus. A kindly providence had done what no man dared to do. That lithe and sinewy form, without its legs, might have contained a bitter heart, and added yet another drop to hatred's overflowing cup.

I pitied most his mother, she who had blessed the day she bore this man child, had seen him grow from babe to glorious manhood, and felt her pain and toil repaid. I hoped she had many others like him. Some Servian mothers had.

II. SECOND MAN. A PEASANT.

In the Balkan Peninsula monasteries are more than places of refuge for people with monastic minds, they minister to a wider public, and are at once hostels and shrines, centres of food supply and travellers' gossip, where merchants market, while monks pray and sing. Their pious founders, long since with the saints, have left a saintly work behind them, theirs is an incense burnt in the furnace of affliction, mounting to heaven on waves of gratitude.

The Monastery of St. Joachim stands in a quiet valley, a mile or more from the main road which links Bulgarian Kjustendil with Turkish Uskub, or in Servian Skoplje. Down this main road the tide of war had swept, leaving a trail of empty granaries, of violated homes, and frightened, wailing children. The people bore these trials patiently, there was nought else to do, but when despair had overcome their hope, they one and all, Christians and infidels alike, sought consolation at the monastery set amid dark green trees. Thither there flocked a hungry, homeless crowd, seeking first food and shelter, then repose, and finding all in the great caravanserai.

I, too, had cause to bless St. Joachim for a night's rest within the walls left standing by the tolerant Turk.

One autumn evening, with some other travellers, I reached the monastery gate. Close by there rose a spring covered with slabs of stone, the water trickling through an iron pipe into a rough-hewn trough. We paused to let our horses drink, and saw, lying upon the ground, a man, or what was left of one. His form was rigid, motionless, only the eyes moved, bright, black, beady eyes, which flitted restlessly from face to face, then turned towards the setting sun and stared, undazzled, at the flaming pageant, only to leave it soon, and throw quick glances here and there at objects nearer and more human.

His story was soon told. He was a Bulgarian soldier struck by a Turkish bullet near the spine and paralysed. Some peasants had found him in a field, and filled with pity had brought him to where he lay, so that, at least, he should not die alone.

Peasants are always kind, those that had done this charitable deed were of no special race, although their lives were hard they had not lost their human sympathies, even in time of war.

A woman brought a pillow for his head, a monk knelt at his other side repeating words that solace dying men.

And then he spoke. The voice, though weak, rang clear; in a hushed silence, it gave the final message of a man whose earthly course was run.

Neither the woman nor the priest had touched the peasant's heart. His thoughts were far away, but not with wife or children, nor did the welfare of his soul trouble his dying moments. He had a farm in the Maritza valley, not far from Philippopolis, there he had spent his life, and lavished all his love and care. To him that strip of land was very dear, and, dying, he remembered it, to give some last instructions for the next autumn sowing.

CHAPTER VIII.

" 1914 " PEACE AND WAR.

IN the early spring of 1914 a revolution broke out in Southern Albania. The Christian Epirotes, renouncing allegiance to the Prince of Wied (the sovereign appointed by the Great Powers), had set up a provisional and independent Government at Argyrocastron, a mountain village about twenty miles north-east of Santi Quaranta. This port lies within easy distance of Corfu, and, by a stroke of fortune, I was able to land there, in spite of the fact that it was held by the insurgents. After a short stay at Argyrocastron I went to Athens, where I was received by both King Constantine and M. Venizelos.

The former regarded the revolution from a strictly military point of view. He said he had decided to take disciplinary measures against officers and men of the Greek Army who aided or abetted the Epirotes, and seemed to think that the only duty of Greek soldiers was to their King, to whom they owed so much. As, apparently, he was without any detailed information on the subject, I did not tell him that numerous Greek soldiers, wearing uniforms, were already with the insurgent bands. The King was at this time the most popular man in Greece, and the consciousness of this obsessed him; he had won his popularity by two campaigns, and was meditating a third, against Turkey, so soon as his army and his fleet would be reorganised and re-equipped. Prussian military methods were to be followed, as far as possible, in

spite of the fact that a French Military Mission had been charged with the training of the troops. King Constantine talked like a young officer who had recently emerged from a staff college; coming from the ruler of a country his conversation left an impression of irresponsibility, one felt he was a dangerous, though well-meaning man.

M. Venizelos was moved, almost to tears, on hearing of the pitiable condition of the Greek refugees from Central Albania, but explained his utter helplessness to relieve their lot. Albania was under the protection of the Great Powers, and he feared that any practical sympathy for revolutionaries, within the frontiers made sacrosanct by the Ambassadors' Conference, might entail serious consequences for himself and Greece. He inquired after M. Zografos, the head of the Provisional Government, and one of his most bitter political opponents. The latter had referred to M. Venizelos in unflattering terms, describing him as both incompetent and unprincipled, but, although it was evident that no love was lost between the two men, the man in power disdained vituperation.

M. Venizelos spoke with real feeling about the religious side of the revolution and the sincerity of the peasants in all that concerned their faith. He seemed amused at the idea of M. Zografos being associated with three Archbishops in the Provisional Government. I asked the reason. He confined himself to saying that M. Zografos was very rich. I replied that, from what I had seen at Argyrocastron, at least one of the Archbishops accepted with patriotic resignation this disqualification for the Kingdom of Heaven on the part of his political chief, and that he had even seemed to enjoy some excellent dinners prepared by the rich man's cook.

The Prelates in question were, in point of fact, the real leaders of the revolution. Between them

they combined all the qualities needed by their peculiar environment. Archbishop Basileus was a worldly-minded old gentleman who, beneath a venerable exterior, concealed political ability of no mean order. Of the other two—one was a meek and learned monk, possessed of great authority among the local clergy; the third, Germanos by name, was a striking and interesting personality. Young, handsome, ascetic, gifted with fiery eloquence, and as religious as his flock, he supplied a moral impulse which redeemed much that was trivial in the conduct of the revolution; his premature death from consumption was a real loss to Epirus and its already hopeless cause.

M. Venizelos said little about general Balkan matters, he appeared tired and dispirited, and it was evident that the Greek Government was not going to get itself into trouble over the Epirotes, in spite of their pure Greek origin. These unfortunate people constituted the wealthiest and most civilised element in the population of Albania, they had an indisputable right to a large share in the Government of that country. This they had not got, and, with the full knowledge of the Great Powers, they had been left, politically, to the tender mercies of men saturated with Turkish traditions, under the nominal Kingship of a conceited and ignorant German Prince.

I reached Belgrade early in April, 1914. The city had resumed its normal aspect. The General Staff were talking and planning war, the general public was more interested in the working of the Commercial Convention with Greece. In political and diplomatic circles vague references were made to certain concessions to Bulgaria in the Vardar Valley. These latter appeared to me to be so inadequate as to be hardly worth discussing, and yet, as matters stood, the Serbs refused to offer more. This attitude, however

unfortunate, was more reasonable in 1914 than at any previous period. In the absence of direct railway communication between Greece and Servia, the Commercial Convention would lose half its point, since the only railway line available passed by the Vardar Valley through the heart of the "Contested Zone." No practicable trace for another line existed, except a tortuous route impinging on Albania.

Ethnical and geographical conditions had conspired to make Macedonia a "Debatable Land," the creation of an independent Albania had added fuel to the flames of discord, it had not only shortened the Serbo-Greek frontier and prevented all communication by sea, but by thwarting Servian and Greek aspirations in that direction, had engendered in both countries an uncompromising state of mind. Bulgaria's claims remained unaltered, they had become crystallised by defeat and disappointment; amid the shifting sands of Balkan politics they stood out like a rock.

The Great Powers had sacrificed the interests of Greece and Servia directly, and those of Bulgaria indirectly, on the altar of an Autonomous Albania. Ingenuous people claimed that this course had been dictated by high-minded motives, by a benevolent, if tardy, recognition of the principles of self-government, whose application in other lands could wait on this strange experiment. Naïveté is charming when not contaminated with hypocrisy, but one swallow does not make a summer; a single act, however specious, cannot efface a decade of intrigue.

An active economic policy in Macedonia had already been initiated by the Austro-Hungarian Government. The first move was characteristic, a share in the control of the Belgrade-Salonika Railway was claimed, on the ground that a large part of the capital for its original construction had been subscribed by citizens of the Dual Monarchy. British newspapers dealt fully with

the financial aspects of the case, but refrained from criticising a proposition which deprived a sovereign independent State of the sole control of a railway within its frontiers. The Servian Government tried to float a loan with which to buy out the foreign shareholders, but failed—high finance is international and obdurate to the poor. *On ne prête qu'aux riches.**

I stayed in Vienna for a few days on my way to London. Here it was generally recognised that, in regard to Servia, a dangerous situation was developing, which could not be neglected. Many serious people frankly expressed the hope that some incident would occur which would provide a pretext for taking military action against the Serbs. No one wanted war, but everyone felt that an end had to be put to " an intolerable state of affairs "; the time for conciliatory measures had passed, the Southern-Slav movement was assuming menacing proportions, and would wreck the Austro-Hungarian Empire, if steps were not promptly taken to nip it in the bud.

Such were the opinions expressed, in private circles, by men and women who did not know with what skill and ingenuity the net had been spread for Servia. In official circles confidence was the prevailing note; the lessons of the last two wars had been forgotten in the Austrian War Office, where the efficiency of the Servian Army was, as usual, under-estimated. Diplomats professed to have no faith in the sincerity of Russia's intentions when posing as the champion of the Southern Slavs; such a policy struck them as being too unselfish for the Government of the Czar.

Cynics are bad psychologists; to them Russia has always been an enigma and a source of error. M. Hartwig expressed the Pan-Slav point of view: Servia was part of Russia, the Serbs were " little brothers,"

* Loans are made only to the rich.

destined once more to reach the Adriatic, to bar the highway to Salonika, to fight again, if need arose, in Slavdom's sacred cause.

The Serbs themselves wanted independence, complete and definite; they hoped to gain it with the help of Russia, and then to found an Empire of their own. That Empire could be created only at the expense of Austria-Hungary, Germany's ally, mate of a monster Python State which soon would raise its head.

Though outwardly at peace, Servia and Bulgaria were arming with feverish haste, preparing to take their places in Europe's opposing camps. The pyramid was rising, taking shape; issues were narrowing, effect was succeeding cause; the disintegration of the Balkan bloc had left the Slavs and Teutons face to face, the arena was cleared for a titanic struggle, those who knew anything of Europe foretold the coming storm.

Austria-Hungary had not long to wait for the desired pretext. The assassination of the Archduke Francis Ferdinand was a sufficiently sensational incident to satisfy the most exacting. The Dual Monarchy took the fatal step, and sent an ultimatum which was its death warrant.

Civilisation stood aghast and feigned a moral indignation which was far from being sincere. Austria-Hungary, in thus using a weak and neighbouring race, was acting in strict conformity with moral standards which the Great Powers themselves had set. Junkers in Germany, Cosmopolitan financiers in Paris, Reactionaries in England, and the Czar's Ministers in Russia had acted, or were prepared to act in precisely similar fashion, each in their separate sphere. In the eyes of these men national sentiment was the appanage of Great Powers, the day of small States was passed. They had admitted the independence of Albania from motives of expediency, and at the instance of Austria-

Hungary, the very State which now they should have judged.

The relations between the different European States were those which exist between the denizens of a jungle—now moral laws restrained them, the weak were the natural victims of the strong. The peoples were sometimes passive, at others artificially excited, but always helpless and inarticulate, driven like cattle in a herd. The " Jingo " Press in every Christian land glorified might as right, eminent soldiers told a respectful public that militarism alone could save the Commonwealth, and that without its wholesome discipline the nations would decay; science collaborated in the race of armaments, which had become a source of riches and a patriotic cult.

The murder at Sarajevo gave Austria-Hungary an opening, she pressed her advantage like a bully bent on the destruction of a weak antagonist. Not only had the weak to go to the wall, and go there with every circumstance of humiliation, a still more signal ignominy was needed to mollify the wounded pride of men like Tisza;* they insisted that Belgrade should be occupied, and that Servian peasants should, once more, endure the horrors of an alien yoke. Only by such means could an Archduke be avenged and jungle law maintained. Blinded by passion, Austria-Hungary had forgotten that there were other carnivori in the jungle whose interests were involved.

The Junkers, capitalists, journalists and soldiers, who had led Europe to the verge of the abyss, now realised what lay before them, something incalculable, immense and elemental. Self-interest was forgotten for a moment, even *their* callous minds recoiled. These men had spent their lives talking of European War, and making costly preparations for it, but at its near

* Count Tisza, leader of the Hungarian Conservatives and ultimately assassinated in Budapest by a Hungarian Socialist.

approach they flinched. In Petrograd a supreme effort was made to avert the cataclysm, it was cynical enough and revealed the morality of the "Balance of Power" in Europe in a brief but pregnant phrase,* *Lâchez l'Autriche et nous lâcherons les Français* was the message to the German Government. It came too late; public opinion in Russia was dangerously excited, and behind the Russian people stood another Power which also was suffering from "an intolerable state of affairs." For nearly fifty years the French had lived beneath a sword of Damocles wielded with German arrogance, they supported with difficulty the "Three Years' Service" system, and had lent much money to the Russians; the French Government seized its opportunity, France made the Servian Cause her own.

Three crowned heads symbolised the might and power of Central Europe—one, senile, embittered, selfish, surrounded by a mediæval Court; another, pompous, vain, ambitious, a war-lord, the apex of a social pyramid which recognised no law but force; the third, an autocrat whose will was law to millions, a man both weak and obstinate, whose character was a riddle to those who knew him best. Men such as these could not prevent the conflagration; considering their influence, and position one wondered why it had not come before.

When war became inevitable, the British Empire was utterly unprepared in both a mental and material sense; many educated people of the upper classes were amazed at each other's ignorance of geography; the man in the street awoke from his wonted lethargy, and studied geography, as well as ethics, in the pages of the *Daily Mail*.

On August 10, 1914, a troop train passed through Woking Station bound for Southampton Harbour.

* Abandon Austria and we will abandon the French.

The men were typical " Tommies " of the old Army, and were in the highest possible spirits. One of them, more curious-minded than the rest, shouted to a be-spectacled civilian on the platform, "'Ow far is it from 'ere to Servia, guv'nor?" The train was in motion, and time did not admit of a satisfactory reply.

After all, at that time, it did not matter where or how far away an unknown land like Servia might be; all the best strategists were agreed that Servia's future destiny would be settled by a great battle in the West. Poor Servia, it would take more than that to save her from invasion; for the moment, anyhow, Heaven was too high, and her Allies were too far.

A little over twelve months later, British and French troops were being disembarked at Salonika and hurried thence to reinforce the already beaten and retreating Serbs. I've wondered sometimes whether the light-hearted boy, who tried to learn geography at Woking Station, was of their number.

He may have struggled up the Vardar Valley and penetrated narrow gorges, where the railway, for want of space, follows the ancient road. He may have seen the mountains of Old Servia and caught an echo from their frowning heights: " Too late, too late, ye cannot enter now."

CHAPTER IX.

1915.—THE NEUTRAL BALKAN STATES.

My duties recalled me to the Balkan Peninsula in the early spring of 1915. None too soon, the Allied Governments had turned their attention to Near Eastern problems and had decided to dispatch an Expeditionary Force to retrieve their damaged prestige in the East. The main objectives were the Dardanelles and Constantinople, respectively the gateway and the pivot of the Ottoman Empire and points of inestimable strategic value for the future conduct of a world-wide war. Imperial policy, in its widest and truest sense, dictated this course of action and, as was natural and logical, the Allied Power which had most at stake supplied the initiative and took the lead.

Great Britain, in its dual capacity of guardian of the sea-routes of the world and the greatest Mohammedan Power, has seldom been in a more critical position. Germany and Turkey acting in combination could approach the Suez Canal through Asia Minor, the Red Sea through Arabia and the Persian Gulf through Mesopotamia; enemy successes in these three directions could hardly fail to have an adverse influence on Mohammedan opinion and, under such conditions, India itself would not be safe. The foundations of the British Empire were endangered, threatened by forces both open and insidious; a British policy, framed by men who understood their business, was the only Allied policy which could properly meet the case. The British statesmen then in office faced this grave situation with steady eyes, and reached a conclusion

which, at the time, was widely criticised, but, to their credit, they persisted in it.

The fiat went forth from Downing Street, and on the experts of Whitehall devolved the task of evolving a strategy in harmony with policy.

Experts, of any kind, are good servants but bad masters; they are prone to pessimism when called to work outside their special spheres, and are, as a rule, indifferent prophets; like the Spaniards, they often seem wiser than they are. Expert and official opinion on both sides of Whitehall was opposed to the expedition to the Dardanelles. The North Sea drew the Navy like a magnet, there it was felt the decisive battle would be fought, and the desire of islanders was natural to make security doubly sure. Mr. Winston Churchill devoted all the resources of his forceful and energetic personality to Eastern Naval preparations, he had both courage and imagination, and brushed aside the protests of officials within his jurisdiction, but these were not the only obstacles—sometimes he must have wondered whether a chasm had not replaced the thoroughfare which separates the Admiralty from the War Office. In the latter building, an old machine, under new and inexperienced direction, was creaking uneasily, barely able to stand the strain caused by the war in France. To the War Office staff, it seemed as if Pelion had been piled on Ossa, when they were asked to co-operate with the Navy in a distant expedition, whose scope and nature brought into strong relief their mental and material unpreparedness. Refuge was sought in procrastination, difficulties were exaggerated, the many human cogs of a complex machine groaned in the throes of a new and unwelcome effort.

In enterprises of this nature, risks must be taken, a circumspect and timid strategy misses the mark. In this particular instance, time was the essence of the

problem; a single Division, at the psychological moment, was worth nine arriving late; a military force of 20,000 men, acting in close support of the Allied Navies, could have achieved success where a host a few weeks later, even if ably led, might fail. The stakes were enormous, the obstacles, both naval and military, formidable but not insuperable. A calm appreciation of the situation should have convinced the most doubting spirits that Constantinople could be taken by a well-timed and vigorous stroke. At this period Turkey was isolated, her forces were disorganised and short of ammunition, the Germans were unable to send either reinforcements or war material to this theatre, except in dribblets. The position of Enver Pasha was precarious, his enemies were numerous and active, they had viewed with profound misgivings the rapid growth of German influence, and were ready for a change. Constantinople was ripe for revolution; the wheel had turned full circle, the Allies, by the irony of fate, could count on assistance from reactionary elements converted by mistrust of Germany into potential supporters of our cause. The neutral Balkan States were waiting and, in their hearts, longing for Allied intervention, it meant the solution of many complicated problems, and they preferred even unpleasant certitude to doubt.

A turning point in history had been reached; statesmen had ordained the expedition and left its execution to amphibious experts; prompt, energetic action based on careful plans was needed, action combining force on land and sea. A watching world was wracked with expectation, something portentous was about to happen, the Small States held their breath. In Whitehall, an official mountain trembled slightly, and forth there crept a tardy, unready mouse.

While troops were being crowded pell-mell into transports and hurried to Gallipoli, the Foreign Offices

in London and Paris took up the question of the neutral Balkan States. A suggestion that reinforcements should be sent to Serbia had gained support in certain Allied quarters and, since the only available port of disembarkation was Salonika, for this, if for no other reason, friendly relations with the Greeks were sought. Under the cloak of the commercial convention with Serbia, ammunition was already passing freely up the Vardar Valley, and it was hoped that the precedent thus established might be extended so as to cover a still more benevolent neutrality, and allow of the passage of French and British troops. Greece was the only Balkan State which depended for its existence on sea communications, she was completely at the mercy of the Allies, and no amount of German intrigue, in court and military circles, could twist the logic of hard facts. Neither King Constantine nor his advisers were prepared to accept formally a technical violation of Greek neutrality, they would have been helpless, however, if the Allies had insisted. To a layman, the diplomatic situation seemed to be typical of those described in a certain class of novel, in which suave but firm diplomacy, supported by overwhelming force, meets every protest with a soothing phrase and lends an air of elegance to the most sordid bargain. When people or States are weak, the path of consent descends by hesitating stages from "No" through "Perhaps" to "Yes."

The Allies did not negotiate upon these lines. They invited the Greeks to send practically the whole of their army to reinforce the Serbs; in return, they undertook to protect Greek communications with Salonika, by occupying the "non-contested" zone in Macedonia with Allied troops. In all my travels in the Balkan peninsula, I had never come across a region to which the description "non-contested" could be applied with any accuracy; in London and Paris it was

visualised by a miracle of self-deception, and acted like a charm. Here was the solution of the Balkan question, an Allied force, immobilised in this mysterious zone, would hold the Bulgarians in check, encourage the Serbs and reassure the Greeks; Rumania would see what efforts we were making and hurry to our aid; the Turks, trembling for Adrianople, would make a separate peace.

For the moment the Greek Government was unable to entertain the proposed arrangement; King Constantine and the Greek General Staff rejected the suggested plan of operations and put forward another of their own, which envisaged a second campaign against Turkey and opened up alluring prospects further East. Temporarily, the negotiations failed to secure either the co-operation of the Greek Army or a more benevolent neutrality on the part of Greece. The political situation in Athens became more and more confused. Allied diplomacy paid assiduous court to M. Venizelos and, thereby, excited the jealousy and mistrust of the King. Telegrams from an Imperial War Lord addressed to "Tino" flattered the monarch's vanity as a strategist, he laughed, with some reason, at our tactics, and grew convinced we could not win the war.

Sofia presented a very different aspect from Athens. In the Bulgarian capital there was little bustle in the streets, political excitement was not apparent, the inhabitants went about their business quietly and, in the case of most of them, that business was military in its nature. Bulgaria, though unwilling to commit herself prematurely, still nursed her wrongs; to obtain redress for these was the object of the entire people, and no neutral State was better prepared for war.

The alliance of Bulgaria was on the market, obtainable by either set of belligerents at a price; that price was the territory in Thrace and Macedonia, of which

Bulgaria considered she had been wrongfully deprived by the Treaty of Bucharest. If the Allies could have satisfied the Bulgarian Government on this point, the Bulgarian Army would have been employed with the same soulless ferocity against the Turks as, in the end, it displayed against the Serbs.

The situation was clearly defined, and the rôle of diplomacy limited to the manipulation of cross-currents of popular feeling and personal sympathies, which, in Bulgaria as in every other State, divided opinion among several political camps. Unfortunately for the Allies, neither the British nor the French representative in Sofia had the requisite qualifications for making verbiage about a "non-contested" zone pass for a definite policy in the Balkans. The British Minister was—rightly or wrongly—credited with Servian sympathies, the French Minister was not a "persona grata" with King Ferdinand, whose favour was all-important in a diplomatic sense. There does not appear to have been any reason for the retention of either of these officials in their posts, except the habitual unwillingness of government departments to disturb routine. The difficulty of finding substitutes did not arise in either case. Our Foreign Office had at its disposal a brilliant young diplomatist, with a unique experience of Balkan capitals, who could have rendered more useful services as Minister in Sofia than as Counsellor of Embassy in Washington; a well-selected French aristocrat would have received a cordial welcome from a Prince of the Orleans family, who himself controlled Bulgaria's foreign policy, and whose "spiritual home" was France. The foregoing were some of the imponderable factors in Bulgaria; in 1914 they could have been turned to good account, in 1915 it was perhaps too late.

In time of war, a diplomatic duel is like a game of cards in which victories are trumps; no amount of

diplomatic skill can convert defeat into success. During the spring and summer of 1915, our Diplomats in the Balkans fought an unequal fight. The conviction that a stalemate existed on the front in France and Flanders was daily gaining ground, public attention was concentrated on the Dardanelles, and here the operations were followed with an interest as critical as it was intelligent. During the war against Turkey, the topographical features in this theatre had been closely studied by the Bulgarian General Staff, when a portion of the Bulgarian Army had penetrated into Turkish Thrace as far as the lines of Bulair. To these men our tactics became daily more incomprehensible. At first the assaults on the Western extremity of the Gallipoli Peninsula were taken to be feints, intended to cover a landing in the neighbourhood of Enos, but, when it was realised that these were the major operations, when thousands of lives were sacrificed for the capture of a few bare and waterless cliffs, their bewilderment became intensified, and into all their minds there crept a doubt. General Fitchett, the Chief of Staff and a man whose English sympathies were widely known, ran considerable risks by giving his expert advice in regard to a landing on the coast near Enos; he was no arm-chair critic but a practical soldier with recent and personal experience of battlefields in Thrace. His views were identical with those of the King of Greece and, indeed, of the vast majority of soldiers in the Balkans, they were rejected or ignored; a pseudo-omniscient optimism pervaded Allied counsels and acted like a blight.

Our friends in Bulgaria contemplated the senseless slaughter at Gallipoli with horror and dismay, waverers turned to German agents, who took full advantage of every change of mood. An influx of German officers and officials began about this time; they had access to all Government departments, and assumed control of

part of the Bulgarian railway system; as one result of their activities Constantinople received supplies of ammunition, whose Bulgarian origin was suspected if not known.

The journey from Sofia to Bucharest lasts less than twenty-four hours, its one noteworthy feature is the abrupt transition from a Slavonic to a Latin race. The Bulgars are reserved and taciturn, strangers are treated coldly, they are not wanted unless they come on business whose utility can be proved. I left Sofia impressed by the efficiency and self-confidence of the people, but chilled by their morose and almost sullen ways. On crossing the Danube a new world was entered, where hearts were warm and life was gay and easy, where everyone talked cleverly and much, and where, perhaps, words counted more than deeds.

In the spring of 1915 Bucharest was a diplomatic arena, in which all the Great Powers were making prodigious efforts. Russia had ceased to treat her southern neighbour as a revolted colony; the Central Empires had developed a sudden sympathy for Rumania's national aspirations, more especially in the direction of Bessarabia; Great Britain had made a loan of £5,000,000, on little or no security, and, as a further proof of disinterested friendship, was buying a large proportion of the output of the oilfields, regardless of the impossibility of either using or exporting this more than ever precious product. A golden age had dawned, business men were doing a roaring trade, cereals were being bought at fancy prices and, looming ahead, were brighter prospects still.

I looked for the warlike preparations of which the War Office in London had so confidently spoken. Of officers there appeared to be no dearth, the streets and cafés were crowded with brilliant uniforms, whose wearers sauntered slowly to and fro, bestowing glances on the softer sex which were returned in kind. To

seek the favour of the fair has at all times been a martial occupation. A wise man once remarked: "I know not how, but martial men are given to love," and added some comments on perils, wine and pleasures which seemed to fit this case. But war is not made with officers alone, men are required, men of the people, who have no decorative functions in the piping times of peace. These were lacking, they were neither on the streets nor in the barracks, they were in their homes, producing wealth and not yet bearing arms.

Rumania was not prepared for war; no reservists had been mobilised, training depôts were at normal strength, there was a shortage of horses for the Cavalry and Field Artillery, the Heavy Artillery was deficient both in quality and quantity, the aviation equipment was out of date, last but not least, the reserve stocks of ammunition had been depleted, and the Rumanian arsenals lacked the plant needed for their replenishment and the maintenance of an army in the field.

A policy which co-ordinated diplomacy and strategy would have carefully weighed the "pros" and "cons" of an alliance with Rumania. The mere presence of an army in a certain geographical position means little, unless that army is an organisation ready to act, containing within itself the means whereby its action can be sustained. Rumania was a granary of corn, a reservoir of oil, both valuable commodities, though more so to our enemies than ourselves, but, from a military point of view, the co-operation of this land of plenty involved a heavy charge. To meet this charge, not only had guns and ammunition to be sent, the Rumanian Army was short of everything, including boots and clothes. Supply alone, though at this period difficult enough, did not completely solve the problem, delivery required communications capable of

transporting at least 300 tons a day. No such communications existed between Rumania and the Western Powers. Imports could reach Bucharest or Jassy only through Serbia or Russia. the railways in both countries were inefficient and congested, to send ammunition by these routes in time of war was to pass it through a sieve. The prophecy, made in May, 1915, that the then existing communications could not deliver more than a seventh of Rumania's requirements was well within the mark.

In short, in the spring and summer of 1915, the alliance of Rumania would have been for the Western Powers a doubtful advantage and a heavy responsibility. The first of these considerations might, at least, have restrained the French Minister at Bucharest from demanding Rumanian intervention with a vehemence, which too frequently degenerated into insult; it was fully appreciated by the Grand Duke Nicholas who, in his quality of Russian Generalissimo, described as "*une folie furieuse*" what the French Diplomat thought would turn the scale in favour of the Allied cause. The second consideration should have appealed to the British Government, the representatives of a people who look before they leap. British statesmanship had inspired the Near Eastern policy of the Allies, and had chosen as first objectives Constantinople and the Dardanelles. Impartial historians will justify this choice; here lay the key of the whole Balkan situation, here were the lever and the fulcrum with which to actuate the Neutral States. Once masters of Constantinople and its waterways, the Allies would have found Rumania willing, when ready with their help, to co-operate in a concerted plan, her army, based on the Black Sea and the Danube, would have become dynamic, a source of strength, instead of weakness, to an inert and passive Russian front; Bulgaria, reduced to impotence, would either

have kept a strict neutrality or, breaking unnatural bonds, have returned to the Russian fold; the Greeks, with their eyes on Smyrna, could not have held aloof.

During the early months of 1915, diplomatic activity in Athens and Sofia might have achieved results, it might, conceivably, have secured the co-operation of the Greeks and Bulgars in our operations at the Dardanelles; at Bucharest the position was wholly different. To urge Rumanian intervention at this period was foolish and immoral, it demanded an immense sacrifice from the Rumanian people which could not help the Allies and might do their cause incalculable harm.

Owing to geographical conditions, the Central Empires were able to offer Rumania more than merely contingent support in return for her co-operation and alliance. Numerous railways cross the Carpathians and by means of these the Rumanian army could have been promptly equipped and efficiently maintained during a forward movement into Bessarabia, a province described by German Diplomats as Rumania's "promised land."

Rumania lay between the upper and the nether millstones of belligerent diplomacy, the mill was working at high pressure, but was not grinding small. M. Bratiano, the Rumanian Prime Minister, was equally uninfluenced by the promises of Germany, the blandishments of Russia, the taunts of France, and the loans of Great Britain. He refused to deviate from a policy of more or less impartial neutrality, and awaited what he himself described as "le moment opportun."*

Disgruntled allied diplomats and many of his countrymen reproached M. Bratiano with lethargy and cowardice, in reality they owed him a debt of gratitude; better than they he knew the unreadiness of the army and the country for an adventurous policy, and, for-

* The opportune moment.

fortunately for Rumania in 1915, he possessed sufficient sense and courage to reject their amateurish plans. On the other hand, he had too sound a judgment to be dazzled by proposals, however specious, which held out prospects of territorial conquest at the expense of Russia, although, as his father's son,* he suspected all Russians of treachery and guile.

Since the death of King Charles in November, 1914, M. Bratiano had been the guiding force in Rumanian political life; he stood between the extremists, who clamoured for intervention on the Allied side without regard for consequences, and the Pro-germans, whose hatred and mistrust of Russia had overcome the instincts of men of a Latin race; his influence with King Ferdinand was undisputed, he used it to impose a neutral attitude, both in the Council and at Court. This man had many qualities of high statesmanship, he loved his country and had at least one deep conviction—he was convinced that in the end the Allies would win the war.

"Le moment opportun" of M. Bratiano was the moment when Rumania could take up arms to fight on the Allies' side, under conditions which would confer a reasonable prospect of success; in his more expansive moods he confessed to cherishing the hope, and even the belief, that the Rumanian Army would deal the decisive blow. A proud thought this, coming from a citizen of a little Neutral State during so great a war; but Ion Bratiano was nothing if not proud.

Events were to put a heavy strain on the Prime Minister's faith and hope, times of trial and temptation lay ahead. When more garrulous champions of the Entente were to give way to doubt. The with-

*The father of M. Bratiano was the celebrated Rumanian patriot who, in 1878, was tricked out of Bessarabia by Prince Gortchakoff, the Russian Envoy, at the Treaty of Vienna.

drawal from the Dardanelles, Bulgaria's alliance with the Central Powers and Serbia's subsequent rout were incidents charged with grave import to Rumania, and destined to postpone indefinitely "le moment opportun." M. Bratiano never wavered, he waited patiently, by thus resisting the impulses of interest and sentiment, he faithfully interpreted the Rumanian people's will.

1915 was a black year for the Allies, a period of diplomatic defeats and military disasters. The officials and experts had had their way; the policy, which had frightened them and of which they had disapproved, had been reversed; Serbia, the victim of predigested plans, had been overrun, the succour so long demanded had been sent three months too late; the Near East, save for some ragged remnants, immobilised in Macedonia, had been denuded of troops and abandoned to the enemy; the legend of British tenacity and perseverance had been tried in a fiery furnace and had not survived the test.

Confusion, both mental and material, prevailed throughout the British Empire; a vague uneasiness had entered every mind; a race of hero-worshippers had vainly sought a hero, the market place was strewn with broken idols eager to reassert their sway. The war had introduced a new dimension, an all pervading influence, a nightmare which haunted waking moments, a great winding-sheet, a deluge submerging human thought.

During these days of evil omen, one reassurance was vouchsafed, one thought consoled, lightening an atmosphere of gloom like a rainbow in a lowering sky. The British people, though disillusioned and humiliated, still kept the virtues of their race; in their hour of trial, they rose above misfortune, and proved themselves worthy descendants of the inspired adventurers whose heritage they held. Men, to whom war was

odious developed into seasoned warriors, and women, who had never worked before, gave up their lives to toil.

On battlefields, heroic valour was regarded as a commonplace, in countless homes, self-sacrifice became a daily rite. In British hearts, despair had found no place, theirs was a confidence born of consciousness of strength, the strength which in Kinglake's glowing words is: "Other than that of mere riches, other than that of gross numbers, strength carried by proud descent from one generation to another, strength awaiting the trials that are to come."

CHAPTER X.

SLEEPING WATERS.

Oh Angel of the East one, one gold look
Across the waters to this twilight nook,
The far sad waters, Angel, to this nook!

ROBT. BROWNING.

BEFORE Rumania became a kingdom, and while Wallachia and Moldavia were separate Principalities, under the suzerainty of Turkish Sultans, a Russian Army occupied the land, the pretext for its presence being the maintenance of law and order. The Russian Government appointed as Pro-Consul a certain General Kissileff, who planted trees and laid out roads and proved himself a wise administrator; the good he did survives him, one of the roads he planned and built commemorates his name.

The *Chaussée Kissileff*, or for short *The Chaussée*, is an avenue of lime trees, which forms the first stage of Rumania's "Great North Road." Four lines of trees border two side tracks and the Central *Chaussée*. During the winter months, their spreading branches afford protection from the wind and rain, in spring and summer, they fill the air with fragrance and cast a grateful shade. This thoroughfare is a boon to Bucharest, it is at once an artery and a lung. Here, when Rumania was a neutral, courted State, beauty encountered valour, while nursemaids, children, dogs and diplomats, of every breed and nation, walked, toddled, gambolled, barked, or passed on scandal, according to their nature and their age.

Beyond the racecourse the *Chaussée bifurcatès*; one branch I have already called Rumania's "Great North Road." It leads, as its name implies, due north to the oilfields and the mountains; the other is a humbler route, and trends westward across a stretch of open country towards a wooded, dim horizon. It I will name Rumania's "Pilgrim's Way."

When I was a dweller in the plain, few houses, large or small, stood on "The Pilgrim's Way," which, after dipping to a stream, curved to the west and followed the northern bank, its bourne some feathery treetops, its only guardians cohorts of unseen frogs, whose multitudinous voices rose in chorus, ranging the diapason of croaking, guttural sounds. This was no intermediate zone athwart the road to Hades, but the frontier of a region known to some as "Sleeping-Waters," whose chief city was a garden, on the stream's bank, and beyond the distant trees.

The votaries of wealth and recreation followed the "Great North Road," seeking Ploesti's oily treasures or villas and a casino at Sinaia, where the gay world of Bucharest breathed mountain air in the Carpathian foothills, and summer heat was tempered amid perennial pines.

"The Pilgrim's Way" was less frequented, but the pilgrims, though not numerous, were, in a sense, select. Among them were the Monarch and his Queen, the Prime Minister, the representatives of several foreign Powers, and men and women wearing names which rang like echoes of Rumania's history when Princes ruled the land.

If asked why they made their pilgrimage so often, the pilgrims would have answered with a half-truth: "We seek serenity in a garden fair, and shade and quiet after the city's heat and noise"—they certainly did not go to meet each other, nor did they, like Chaucer's characters, tell tales and gossip as they fared along the

road—they went to the same shrine, but went separately, they made their vows to the same Deity, but they made them one by one.

Two landmarks lay beside the road, serving as measures of the Pilgrim's Progress, both were pathetic and symbolical—one was a broken bridge, which was always being repaired in slow and dilatory fashion, the other a mill, which never appeared to work.

Bratiano himself had built bridges in his youth, and, speaking both as expert and Prime Minister, he declared one day that when the bridge would be completely mended Rumania would forswear neutrality and join the Allied Cause. A whimsical conceit indeed, but illustrative of its author's mood. When Italy, a Latin and a sister State, bound, like Rumania, by a Treaty to both the Central Powers, had taken the irrevocable step, work was resumed upon the bridge with greater energy; but soon it languished, and blocks of rough-hewn stone encumbered the wayside, mute symbols of the hesitation which was still torturing a cautious statesman's mind.

The mill stands at the western end of a broad reach of the same stream which traverses the realm of frogs; the waters, held up by a dam, are as still and motionless as a standing pond, and yet they once had turned the mill wheel, although, no doubt, they had always seemed to sleep. A village begins here where the waters broaden; three years ago it was a straggling street of squalid houses, where peasants dwelt in the intervals of laborious days. Rumanian peasants, at this period, lived under laws which left them little liberty, and gave them few delights. Their toil accumulated riches for their masters, the hereditary owners of the soil, while they eked out a scanty livelihood, and though in name free men, in fact they were half slaves.

Peasants as slaves are seldom rebels. Spartacus has won a place in history by being the exception to the rule, a rule well known to men who never read a book, but feel instinctively that they themselves are helpless to redress their wrongs. Such is the bitter truth, and those who should know better often presume on it, until their victims, exasperated by neglect and insolence, lose for a while the habit of forbearance, flame into sudden anger, indulge in fierce reprisals, and when exhaustion follows relapse into dull despair. Wrongs unredressed resemble pent-up waters, which seek an outlet, useful or wasteful as the case may be, and finding none, in time they sweep away the stoutest dam, causing widespread destruction by their dissipated force.

In 1907 a large number of Rumanian peasants had revolted. Order, so-called, had been restored by employing other peasants, clothed in uniforms, to shoot their fellow-sufferers down. The tragedy of violence and repression was of but short duration; once more the peasants resigned themselves to fate, once more their smouldering passions were pent up by a dam of military force.

Bratiano, as leader of the Liberal Party, became Prime Minister at the end of 1913; he realised more clearly than his predecessors that Rumania's peasant population was one of the country's greatest assets, and that, under the then existing conditions, this asset was not being fully utilised; his Government was pledged to a scheme of agrarian reform, and began its task with a characteristic act—money was needed, but increased taxation meant loss of popularity, and so the Army vote was drawn upon, and the equipment of the troops neglected. Like many others, Bratiano had refused to believe that the German people would so abase themselves before the Junkers as to permit the latter to provoke a European war; he had been

mistaken, he had erred by rating commonsense too high. When Germany's criminal folly became an accomplished fact, it found the Rumanian Army unprepared, and shattered Bratiano's plans, Rumania, though a neutral State, lived in the shadow of the cataclysm, perpetually a prey to excursions and alarms: reforms in such an atmosphere were impossible, the old abuses lingered, the middle classes reaped a golden harvest, and further claims were made on the patience of the poor.

Mad misdirection and abuse of human effort were disintegrating Central Europe, and had paralysed progressive legislation in every neighbouring State. During his frequent pilgrimages, a disappointed statesman had time for sombre meditations, he may have seen a symbol of them in a wide stretch of sleeping waters stagnating round a disused mill.

An avenue of elm trees leads westward from the mill, skirting the water's edge; it runs in a straight line on level ground, and so, a pilgrim entering by the gate could see at the far end, although it was a kilometre distant, a walnut tree against a white background. When blazing sunlight beat down on the fields and swirls of dust choked travellers on the road, this avenue was always cool and green and, like a vast cathedral's nave, soothed anxious, troubled spirits and rested dazzled eyes. At all seasons of the year, an innumerable host of rooks circled above the elms, and from a choir in the clouds bird-voices pealed in deep-toned rapturous crescendos, lulling the memories of petty strife and discord brought from the city in the plain.

The avenue terminated at the walnut tree, perhaps it does so still—its foliage has been thrice renewed since my last pilgrimage, and in those years man's action has outpaced the changing seasons—youth has learned sorrow over-early, lives have been withered up

like leaves, few hearts or homes have passed unscathed through the fierce ordeal of the war. All has been changed, even inanimate objects, robbed of the glamour which enveloped them, cannot be quite the same; therefore, when picturing these scenes and telling of the memories which haunt them, the past tense will be used.

A low, two-storied building, in colour mainly white, with wide verandahs embowered in creepers, stood out against the sky beyond the walnut tree. The house faced south, on both sides and behind it were open spaces flanked by greenhouses and walled gardens, through which there ran an avenue of Italian poplars, linking the village with a private chapel; in front, the "sleeping waters" spread out in their full glory, a broad and placid surface fringed with willows, which leaned away from the supporting banks as though they sought their own reflection. Between the waters and the house a palace stood, empty but not a ruin, a monumental relic of a bygone reign and period; standing four square, crowned and protected by a roof of slate. Such buildings can be seen in Venice and Ragusa, with fluted columns poised on balustrades of rich and fanciful design, composing graceful loggias.

More than two centuries have passed since Bassarab Brancovan, a ruling prince, first brought Italian craftsmen to Wallachia. The tokens of these exiles' art are numerous, but nowhere do they find such perfect and complete expression as in this palace, built for the prince himself, whose pale, brick walls, with fretted cornices and sculptured Gothic windows, are mirrored in a glassy surface and framed by willow trees.

Prince Brancovan must have been a man with a skin impervious to mosquitoes; the pilgrims who followed in his footsteps learned to tolerate distractions, which were inseparable from the site and as much part of it as thorns are of a rose's stem.

Within the dwelling-house, the rooms looked larger than they were, an optical delusion was produced by shadows on floor and ceiling and corners obscured in gloom. The curtains hung upon the walls like draperies, and chairs and tables were disposed in groups, with an unerring instinct for achieving harmony between utility and taste. Flowers were never absent from these rooms, and made the house a floral temple, whose forecourt was alternately the greenhouse and the garden, the former produced in January what the latter gave in June.

Such was the shrine—the presiding Deity was a lady still young in years, but learned in history and the arts, beyond the compass of most men. With her there lived her daughter and an English governess, a peacock in the garden and a mouse-coloured Persian cat.

Here, men whose lives were darkened by suspicion found a rare atmosphere, where mystery was physical, and did not hide the truth; here, could be learned the story of a race from one whose memory was saturated with traditions, who faced the future calmly, knowing its perils, sustained by hope and faith; here could be heard the twin voices of sanity and reason, expounding not what Rumania was supposed to think,* but what Rumania thought.

In Bucharest, a very different tone prevailed—sentimentality, not wholly free from interest, combined with unscrupulous propaganda to misrepresent the issues before the Rumanian people and the Government. • Even official representatives of the Allied Powers joined in the conspiracy of deception. In the month of April, 1915, the French Military Attaché announced, with all the authority conferred by his position and access to secret sources of information, that the Germans could not continue the war for more than two months from the date on which he spoke, as

their stocks of copper were exhausted; the argument based on this astounding statement was that Rumania should intervene at once, and lay hands on Transylvania before it would be too late. In private life a man who tried to gain advancement by such methods would be locked up for fraud.

In England and France the ignorance about Rumania, even in official circles, was amazing; for knowledge ready substitutes were found in prejudices and preconceived ideas. These ideas were based on reports furnished by Secret Service agents of the most obvious description, whose exemplars were the villains in the novels of Le Queux, and who were regarded with amusement and contempt by people on the spot. The information thus obtained consisted of echoes from the cafés and excerpts from the gutter press. It was sensational enough, though mischievous and misleading, and gave satisfaction to officials who never faced realities, unless they suited their desires.

By certain circles at Bucharest, the foibles of the Allied Governments were systematically exploited: politicians emerged from the shades of opposition into a meretricious limelight; bankers and business men made deals which opened up an El Dorado, and social grudges were revived under the cloak of patriotic zeal. While Rumania remained a neutral State, Bucharest was a city divided against itself. Two camps were formed, a war of words was waged; slander and calumny were the weapons, and were wielded by both men and women with venom and impunity.

To minds possessed and poisoned by this ignoble strife, the calm serenity of "the sleeping waters" was anathema; the extremists and their partisans viewed with suspicion a detachment which was as natural as it was sincere. They could not understand, far less forgive, an attitude of aloofness to their cliques and combinations; they were enraged by such neglect,

since, with some reason, they took it for disdain. Thoughtless themselves, and caught up in a vortex of mental confusion and unreason, they poured the vials of their jealousy and hate upon a head as innocent as fair, because it dared to think.

* * * * *

By a strange turn of fate, I meditate this fragment of past memories down by the waters of Old Nile. Behind me rise the columns of a temple, whose capitals portray the Lotus and Papyrus, signs of the River God. Before me lies the tank, where the god lived three thousand years ago. By the same path on which I stand were hurried shrieking victims, as sacrifices to a crocodile, an animal so dangerous to river-folk that they worshipped it, and sought to propitiate the object of their fear with their own flesh and blood.

Man's nature has changed little since those days; his cruelty takes more subtle forms, but is not a whit less harsh. His god is Mammon, and his victims the poor and weak, or those who, by innate superiority, are an unconscious menace and reproach. The sacrificial act does not consist in killing—to Mammon, oblations must be made in such a way as not to roughly kill the victims but first to spoil their lives.

CHAPTER XI.

1916.—THE DISASTER IN RUMANIA.

DURING the early months of 1916, Bucharest had been comparatively neglected by the Foreign Offices of the belligerent States. So far as could be seen, the Central Empires had abandoned the hope of obtaining Rumanian co-operation against Russia. Count Czernin* had expressed himself openly to that effect, and his German colleague, though more discreet, in all probability shared his views. The French and Italian Ministers were a prey to exasperation and suspicions; to them it seemed outrageous that a little Latin State should refuse to act on French advice or to follow Italy's example; their prejudices warped their judgment, they lost their sense of dignity, and sank to the level of mere partisans. Such men could not influence the coldly logical mind of Bratiano, who treated them with scorn. The British and Russian Ministers were the buttresses of allied diplomacy in Bucharest. Both stood for so much; one was the spokesman of a people whose good faith and love of fair play were still unquestioned, the other was the envoy of the only Allied Power in direct contact with Rumania, a Power whose past conduct had justified mistrust, but whose size inspired fear. Through no fault of their own, these two men were unable to exert their proper influence; neither of them had definite

* Count Czernin was at this period Austro-Hungarian Minister in Bucharest; he succeeded Count Bechtold as Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Dual Monarchy after the death of the Emperor Francis Joseph.

instructions from his Government, and both had learned, from past experience, that under such conditions it was better to "wait and see." To any dispassionate observer on the spot, this meant—to wait on events and see disaster come.

The perils of premature intervention, both for the Allies and the Rumanian people, were only too obvious. While Rumania's sole link with the Western Powers was a precarious line of communications through Russia, her neutrality was preferable to her alliance; the former was no doubt unsatisfactory, but the latter exposed a reservoir of food supplies and petrol to invasion from the south and west. Even if properly equipped and efficiently maintained, the Rumanian Army would have had no easy task; in the absence of these conditions it was madness to go to war.

In Paris, the irritation was profound. The French Government had assumed control of the negotiations with the neutral Balkan States, and was mastered by an impatience born of intolerance and fear. This frame of mind had been induced by a total misconception of the real facts of the case. There was no danger that the Rumanian people, however tempted, would join the Central Powers. Bratiano surveyed the European situation through the same telescope as the Allies. He saw their final triumph clearly, but knew it was not so close as they imagined. His vision, perhaps, had magnified the distance by looking through the larger end, but, unlike them, he knew the complexity of the problem to be dealt with in the East; they viewed it merely as an adjunct to the slaughter in the West.

The Quai d'Orsay was quite incapable of appreciating the Rumanian point of view; its self-appointed task was "to bring Rumania in." Persuasion, on moral and sentimental grounds, had been unavailing.

Some details of the Italian Treaty had leaked out, and had revealed a marked absence of the principles of self-sacrifice and abnegation, in the cause of liberty, on the part of a greater Latin State. It was clear that Rumania, like Italy, would have to get her price; much would depend, however, on the way that price was paid.

Rumania claimed Transylvania, together with Bukovina and the Banat,* as her share of the spoil, in the event of Allied victory; she was eager to fight for these Austro-Hungarian provinces, if given a fighting chance. Unfortunately for the Allies, no amount of eloquence could improve the communications through the Russian Empire, and a second attempt to force the Dardanelles was excluded from their plans. Arguments based on the presence of Allied troops at Salonika, with which it was suggested the Rumanian Army might co-operate, were without effect, and the statement in this connection that the shortest way to Budapest was via Sofia was regarded as more picturesque than true. The Rumanian Government had no desire to make war on the south bank of the Danube, where nothing was to be gained, and the Rumanian General Staff knew, from experience, the difficulties of a Danube crossing if seriously opposed. An operation of this nature would have absorbed a large proportion of the Rumanian forces, leaving an insufficient number to hold the frontier in the Carpathians, which was longer than the Allied front in France, while the distance from its nearest point to Bucharest was less than 100 miles.

The foregoing were some of the obstacles to Rumanian intervention. To overcome them by fair means demanded considerable efforts from the Allies

* An Hungarian province at the confluence of the Danube and the Theiss, N.E. of Belgrade.

as part of a concerted plan. No such plan existed; France could offer nothing except promises of ammunition, Great Britain could provide ships and money, Russia alone could give support and, if the need arose, apply pressure to this neutral State.

The case of Greece was simpler. There, reluctance could be dealt with and "unnatural" behaviour punished. The Piræus could be reached by sea, whereas Rumania was land-locked to the Allies. The Russian Empire was the neighbour and the only highway, and Germany was near.

"All is fair in love and war." The Allies had passed through the stage of courtship with Rumania; their blandishments and arguments had yielded no results. Cajolery of agents behind the back of Bratiano had also been tried and failed. Now they declared war on her neutrality, and, through the force of circumstances, let Russia take the lead.

The British Government had, as usual, no policy in the Balkans, and was amenable to French advice. A series of diplomatic rebuffs at Athens had confirmed our Foreign Office in its traditional attitude of disinterestedness, and the general feeling was that Rumania, in common honesty, should intervene, because she had accepted loans. Some people think that British gold can purchase anything, including a little country's soul. The War Office Staff was absorbed by the operations in France and Flanders, to the exclusion of all other theatres in a world-wide war. To the strategists of Whitehall the military participation of Rumania was just another "side-show," which they accepted with some reserves and treated as the lighter side of war; they were prepared to endorse any plan which did not involve the use of British soldiers, and left their own selves free to duplicate the work of Army Staffs and other exponents of "Grand Tactics" already on the Western front.

Ignorance and indifference made these officers the echoes of Frenchmen who posed as experts; the protests of Englishmen who pointed out that the Rumanian Army was, figuratively, "in the air," were brushed aside as technical objections, which would have carried weight in the "main theatre," but were pretexts, in a "side-show," for inaction and delay. These military "Panglosses" had chosen to forget their own shortsightedness and mismanagement at Gallipoli, the fate of Servia contained no lesson for them, they urged Rumania to do what they themselves would not have done, and stilled the voice of conscience with the hope that all would be for the best in the best of all possible alliances, if not at once at any rate in the end. What that end would be or when it would occur, the official mind could not foresee. It foresaw nothing except a chance of self-advancement, and that it promptly seized.

In Petrograd there had never been great enthusiasm in regard to Rumanian intervention. Russian military opinion, as expressed by the Grand Duke Nicholas in 1915, had been opposed to an extension of the Eastern front by the Rumanian Army, whose unpreparedness was well known to the Russian Staff. This reasoning had at the time been eminently sound, and the fact that in the intervening period Bulgaria had joined forces with the Central Powers only increased its cogency. Another factor supervened: the men who ruled Russia at this period had not forgotten Plevna.* Great Powers dislike being under obligations to little neighbouring States, and are apt to be bad debtors when it comes to paying debts. Though not overburdened with scruples, the Russian Government realised that, on this occasion, a contract entered into

* In the war of 1877 between Russia and Turkey, Rumania had come to the rescue of Russia when the Russian army was held up by the Turks under Osman Pasha at Plevna.

with Rumania might have to be fulfilled. The Pan-Slavist elements in Petrograd objected to any aggrandisement of the southern neighbour, and thought Rumania's price too high; in their eyes, postponement of final victory was preferable to having, for the second time, so exacting a partner in success. Hitherto, Russia had worked to keep Rumania out, while France and Great Britain tried to bring her in.

The Russian character is a strange amalgam; some of its moods are noble and poetic, others are fierce and ruthless as those of a wild beast. When the Allies had used persuasion with Rumania, Russia had stood aside, but when a different note was sounded, when growing irritation and impatience decided the Government in Paris to force Rumania's hand, a ready and willing instrument was found in the Government of the Czar. Here was a policy which gave full scope to strength and cunning; Great Britain and France might preach morality and justice, Russia would act with violence and guile.

From the beginning of June onwards, a veil of secrecy shrouded the negotiations of the Allies as to the plan of action in Rumania.* The "High Contracting Parties" might well have quoted the hero of a double murder when he said "Not easily have we three come to this." Though they were only planning murder, it was essential for that plan's success to protect it from all criticisms until it had done its work.

Early in July the first overt move was made. It took the form of a message from Russian General Headquarters, and was sent by General Alexieff, the Chief of Staff of all the Russian armies, who, of course, acted in his Imperial master's name. The general tenor of this communication was to the effect that a

* The husband of Francesca da Rimini, who killed his wife and her lover.

favourable opportunity had presented itself for Rumania's intervention, which, if not seized without delay, might pass irrevocably, since her assistance would no longer be required and she would not even be permitted to make a triumphal entry into Transylvania; the concluding words were, "Now or never." A statement, a taunt, and a threat made up the Russian ultimatum, for it was nothing else, and, as was only fitting, it was communicated by the Russian Military Attaché to the Rumanian Chief of Staff and to the Prime Minister in his dual capacity of Minister for War. Within a few days, the British and French Military Attachés received instructions from their respective War Offices to endorse the communication made verbally by their Russian colleague. So far, apparently, the Allied Ministers in Bucharest had had no instructions in the matter, and two of them, at least, continued to "wait and see."

After the first shock of disgust, Bratiano was inclined to pay no attention to proceedings so irregular, as to suggest ignorance of international usages on the part of certain officers, although they were Chiefs of Staff. He may have been right about their ignorance, but the second move must have dispelled any doubts as to their pertinacity and intentions. It emanated from Paris and from a distinguished military authority. General Joffre instructed the French Military Attaché to inform the Rumanian War Office that the Central Empires *could* not send more than ten divisions to operate against Rumania; five of these would be German and five Austro-Hungarian divisions. The latter were described as being of inferior class. No reference was made to Bulgarian or Turkish forces, an omission which justified the inference that those already on the southern frontier could not be reinforced. The British and Russian Attachés were instructed to confirm this estimate. The Italian had

standing orders from his War Office, under all and any circumstances, to agree with the other three.

General Joffre was much respected in Rumania. His opinion on military matters could not fail to impress a civilian, and that opinion had been uttered in no uncertain voice. For the first time, Bratiano wavered. The Rumanian Army consisted of sixteen divisions, of which ten were fairly well equipped. If Joffre's estimate of enemy forces was correct, the invasion of Transylvania could be undertaken with fair chances of success. Agents reported that Germany was weakening and that Austria-Hungary was verging on collapse; there might be some truth in the Russian General's statement, and perhaps "le moment opportun" had come.

The Prime Minister was the son of a great Rumanian patriot and wished to follow in his father's steps; the father had united two Principalities in a kingdom, the son had set himself the task of extending that kingdom beyond the western mountains, and aspired to be the architect of the Greater Rumania of his father's prophetic dreams. Fear of not winning makes men gamble, and this anticipatory fear pervaded Bratiano's mind; he in whom courage went with pride now quailed before prospective self-reproach.

Allied diplomacy was quick to perceive the effect of the first two moves; these had been, respectively, a threat and an assurance, the third was a promise: before Rumania intervened, General Sarraill's* army would make an offensive on a scale large enough to prevent the dispatch of enemy reinforcements from the Salonika front to the Dobrudja or the Danube. The strength of the enemy forces in Northern Bulgaria was variously estimated, but the Rumanian General Staff was informed that *their* figures were

* The French General commanding the Allied Forces at Salonika.

exaggerated and an emphatic denial was given as to the presence of Turkish troops. The Allied Intelligence Service overlooked the fact that Rumania still had her representatives in Sofia, and among them at least one officer who had both eyes and ears.

About this time the Bulgarian Government made overtures to the Rumanian Prime Minister in regard to a separate peace. How far these overtures were sincere it would be hard to say. Their purport was to use Rumania as an intermediary; their effect was to remove the last misgivings from Bratiano's mind. He attached no great importance to the Salonika offensive, except in so far as it might strengthen Bulgaria's desire for peace.

By the end of July the negotiations for Rumanian intervention were far advanced. In these, Russia played the leading part; proposals and counter-proposals passed continually between Russian Headquarters and the Rumanian War Office, while in Petrograd acquiescence was, at last, obtained for the full payment of Rumania's price. On August 16 a Treaty and Military Convention were signed by Bratiano and the representatives of the four leading Allied States. The Treaty guaranteed to Rumania, in the event of the Allies being victorious, all the territory she claimed in Austria-Hungary, including the whole of the region called the Banat at the confluence of the Danube and the Theiss. In the Military Convention, the Allies promised, among other things:

An offensive on the Salonika front, to begin ten days before Rumania's first act of war;

A Russian offensive in the Carpathians during Rumania's mobilisation;

The dispatch of Russian forces to the Dobruja, consisting of two infantry divisions and one cavalry division;

Supplies of ammunition delivered in Rumania at the rate of 300 tons per day.

Rumania, on her side, undertook to declare war against and attack *Austria-Hungary* with all her land and sea forces, at latest, ten days after the commencement of the Allied offensive on the Salonika front. The declaration of war was to be made on the first day of mobilisation, when it was agreed the Rumanian frontier troops would attack the Austro-Hungarian positions in the Carpathian passes. The only reference to any enemy State other than *Austria-Hungary* concerned Bulgaria; it was indirect, since it applied to the Russian forces to be sent to the Dobruja, and laid down that these would co-operate with the Rumanians against the Bulgars, although the Treaty of Alliance did not, as regards the latter people, envisage a state of war. In this connection there had been a difference of opinion between the French and Russians; the former still hankered after an invasion of Bulgaria, the latter insisted that Rumania's main effort should be made in Transylvania. The Russian point of view had prevailed, owing to the fact that the Rumanian General Staff refused to undertake any operations against Bulgaria without reinforcements of at least 150,000 Russian troops. General Alexieff declared he could not spare this number, and was reluctant to spare even three divisions for the protection of Rumania beyond a certain line. That line, as events soon proved, was not in the Southern Carpathians nor on the Danube; it was the shortest line between his own left flank and the coast of the Black Sea.

During the night of August 27-28, the first act of war took place; Rumanian troops stormed and captured the enemy position in the Carpathians along the whole length of frontier, and on the following day war was declared formally against *Austria-Hungary*.

The news was flashed throughout the world and was considered a triumph for the Allies. The wildest stories circulated; the Rumanian Army was described as well-equipped and numerous, a host unwearied by the strain of war and capable of marching through the mountains as far as Budapest. In Paris, joy bordered on hysteria, self-satisfaction knew no limits, and the men who had planned this master-stroke were the heroes of the hour. London and Petrograd were less excited; official appetites were whetted but not yet satisfied; in the former, Rumanian intervention was still regarded as a "side-show"; in the latter, some schemers saw the curtain rising on a new drama in the East. The mass of people in the Allied States knew nothing about the situation, but, like the "Tommys" in the trenches, they cheered the long-awaited tidings that Rumania had come in.

Germany at once made common cause with Austria-Hungary. The German Minister* in Bucharest left the Rumanian capital, under escort, disgruntled if not surprised. Events had moved too quickly for this diplomat. The inevitable had happened. He had all along foreseen it; his annoyance was due to the fact that it had come too soon. He left behind him tell-tale proofs of the baseness to which his country could descend in order to win a war; if his departure had not been so hurried, the means for poisoning a city's water would either have been taken with him or put to fearful use. As the train in which he travelled was crossing the River Sereth,† he said to the officer of the escort, "Here is the future frontier between Austria-Hungary and Russia." He may have been merely speculating, as any cynic might, or, on the other hand, he may have had an inkling of Russia's

* Baron von der Büsche; he became later Under-Secretary of State in the Foreign Office at Berlin.

† The River Sereth divides Wallachia from Moldavia.

secret plans. This river marked the shortest line between the Russian left in the Carpathians and the coast of the Black Sea. North of it lay Moldavia, a pastoral land and poor; south of it lay Wallachia, teeming with corn and oil. Rumania was a pygmy State and had entered on a war of giants; to both her greater neighbours it would not be displeasing if she were broken on the wheel. In Petrograd, it was rumoured that certain members of the Government were inclined for a separate peace, and it was common knowledge that the Central Empires stood in desperate need of Wallachia's resources. To an intelligent German diplomat, these were the elements of a deal.

The details of the campaign in Rumania will form the subject of a detailed history and, in so far as the conduct of the Rumanian peasants was concerned, will furnish a record of heroism and endurance unsurpassed in any theatre of war. From the very outset the Rumanian General Staff was confronted with the impossible task of undertaking simultaneously an offensive in a mountainous country and holding two lengthy frontiers converging in a narrow salient. In most essential respects the Allies broke their promises, as set forth in the Convention they had signed. Ten days after the first invasion of Transylvania, General Sarraill announced that the preparations for his offensive were "pursuing their normal course," an offensive which should have started some twenty days before. The Russians remained inactive in the Carpathians and, so far from anticipating the forward movement of the Rumanian Army, failed to co-operate when it had been made. The supplies of ammunition, so confidently promised, arrived in dribblets; the average quantity received was 80 tons per day.

To the surprise of both Bratiano and the Government in Petrograd, Bulgaria acted with her Allies.

Up to the last moment the Prime Minister had believed in the sincerity of the peace overtures, and most Russian officers were convinced that their mere presence in the Dobruja would have a pacifying effect. In the event, Bulgarian forces attacked (without a declaration of war) the Rumanian bridgeheads on the south bank of the Danube and invaded the Dobruja, where they were reinforced by Turks. A situation had arisen which had not been foreseen in the Military Convention. The southern frontier was now seriously threatened, and the Russian detachment was not strong enough, in co-operation with six weak Rumanian divisions, to hold it throughout its length.

General Joffre's estimate of the enemy forces which could be brought against Rumania, so far from being approximately exact, was eventually exceeded more than threefold. Fresh troops were continually launched against the wearied Rumanian soldiers, who, from sheer fatigue, at last became demoralised. Retreats followed, in quick succession, on the first brilliant advance in Transylvania; the Rumanians were forced to abandon all their conquests, since, at every point of contact, they were outnumbered and outgunned. Paris and London were not sparing in advice, but of that Rumania had no need. She needed guns and men; Russia alone could give them and, for the moment, Russia would not give. A storm of criticism now arose. The men who had forced Rumania's hand perceived that disaster was impending, they sought an explanation for it, and blamed the Rumanian troops.

War, it is claimed, discovers many virtues. It does not create them but it does provide an opportunity for their exploitation by men who do not fight on battle-fields. To these latter, war is Jack Horner's pie; they pull out all the plums complacently, and sit in safe but not secluded corners, clinging like limpets to

official rank. They mask with mystery their mediocrity and take the line of least resistance. Success in life has taught them that responsibility, especially when moral, is one of the things to shirk. They never are to blame when failure issues from their plans; that is the fault of other men, who are simple enough to fight.

While such men retain their present influence, the peoples must prepare for war. No League of Nations will control them; they will control the League.

On November 24, a detachment of German troops crossed the Danube 56 miles south-west of Bucharest, under cover of a thick fog. The end had come. Bucharest was doomed; enemy forces were converging on the capital from three directions; they were already in possession of the rich corn lands of Wallachia, and were threatening the oilfields both from the north and west. The Rumanian General Staff made a last appeal for Russian reinforcements and some were sent, but their movements were so slow and their co-operation so half-hearted, that even Russian representatives at Rumanian Headquarters joined in indignant protests.

As early as September, General Alexieff had advised a retirement to the Sereth, although he must have realised that such an operation involved abandoning, without a struggle, the two main objectives of the Central Empires, viz., the resources of Wallachia and access to the Danube ports between Galatz and the Iron Gate. If this man was honest, he was incompetent; no other explanation can be given of such fatal obstinacy and pride. His advice had not been taken, so he left Wallachia unsupported and flooded Moldavia with Russian Army Corps. These troops lived on the country-side like locusts and drained it of supplies, but they did not make the offensive so long promised, that was indefinitely postponed.

Despondency and alarm pervaded Bucharest. The civilian elements did not fear the Germans, but they dreaded the Turks and Bulgars, whose atrocities in the Dobruja had appalled the stoutest hearts. The seat of Government had been transferred to Jassy, a few officials had remained, but their loyalty was more than doubtful to what appeared a losing cause. The population of the city was like a flock of sheep without its shepherd and wandered aimlessly about, seeking for information and encouragement which no honest man could give. Orders had been posted broadcast, instructing the inhabitants to stay quietly in their homes. So far, the poorer people had obeyed and watched, with patient if puzzled resignation, the departure of the rich and privileged in motor cars and trains. South of the town a battle was in progress, and bulletins from Presan* spoke of a great success: the simple were hoping for a victory, which would save their hearths and homes.

Throughout the war, a flag had waved over the Royal Palace, and, though the King and Queen had left, during these first days of Rumania's agony, it had remained unfurled, for the palace was a hospital and under Royal care. To anxious watchers in the street, this flag was a comfort and a sign: it proved the presence of some occupants, who, if danger threatened, would surely be removed. One morning, early in December, the people walking past the palace saw that the flag had gone.

The army in the south had been defeated and was in full retreat. Hundreds of wounded men and stragglers confirmed the rumours of disaster; they

* Presan was one of Roumania's ablest generals; he had commanded the Northern Army at the commencement of hostilities, and was entrusted with the direction of the operations for the defence of Bucharest. After the retreat into Moldavia he became Chief of Staff to the King.

were its human symbols, their broken and dejected mien banished all optimistic doubts.

An exodus ensued; an exodus as unpremeditated as it was unreasoning. The fugitives did not consider why they fled, nor whither they would go: they were unnerved by months of strain and almost daily bombing: an uncontrollable impulse forced them to leave the stricken town. A motley crowd, on foot and horseback, in every sort of vehicle, in every stage of misery and despair, streamed past the lime trees of the *Chaussée Kisileff* and surged up the Great North Road.

The season was far advanced. Out of the north-east came an eager wind and snow began to fall, large flakes fell softly but persistently from a surcharged, leaden sky and lay upon the country-side like a wide-spreading shroud; a shroud for many little children, their innocence had not availed to save them; cunning and selfishness are better safeguards than youth and innocence in time of war.

I caught up what might be called the rearguard of this lamentable procession two miles to the south of a little Wallachian town, which lay close to the frontier of Moldavia and General Alexieff's shortest line. Motor cars, country carts and wagons stood four abreast across the road, in a long column stretching northwards, whose immobility impeded further progress, however slow; the gathering darkness and exhaustion had set a period to this tragic flight.

On foot, I reached the Headquarters of Count Keller, the commander of a Russian Cavalry Corps; the General had just finished dinner when I entered, and, perhaps for this reason, his outlook on the situation was less gloomy than otherwise it might have been. Count Keller was not devoid of human feeling, the welter of suffering outside his lodging would have

touched a heart of stone; but, as a soldier, he was filled with indignation against the Rumanian Government, for having permitted thousands of civilians to use the only highway in this region, and thereby, to block, for two whole days, the forward movement of his corps. The obvious retort was that his presence there was useless: he had arrived two months too late.

On the following day, the refugees from Wallachia crossed the Sereth into Moldavia, and found security behind a screen composed of Russian troops. About half a million Russian soldiers had arrived in the Northern Principality and more were yet to come. Wild, uncouth Cossacks swarmed in every village, their first thoughts plunder and the satisfaction of gross appetites; some tried to sell their splendid horses for alcohol in any form.

The first act of the Rumanian tragedy was drawing to its close. A little Latin country had yielded to bribes and threats and had entered, under Russian auspices, into a European war. Now it lay crushed and broken, the victim of two invasions: one, by the enemy in the south; the other, by Russians in the north.

The Western Powers were lavish in their sympathy; they had little else to give and were the helpless witnesses of the evil they had done. In France, a restless, ignorant optimism had conceived a selfish plan; Great Britain had endorsed it, and Russia, in the name of Allied interests, had pursued a traditional Russian policy, which had been both sinister and obscure.

"He that builds a fair house upon an ill seat, committeth himself to prison." In 1912, the Great Powers, of those days, had laid the foundations of their policy in the Balkans. Ignorance, inertia, selfishness and greed had characterised their State-

craft: an ill seat this on which to build, but one well fitted for a pyramid of errors. That pyramid was rising fast and one more block had just been added, an error as tragic as the rest. Though no fair house, it was to hold its master builders like a prison; for some among them, it was destined to fulfil its proper function—the function of a tomb.

CHAPTER XII.

1917.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION AND THE RUSSO-RUMANIAN OFFENSIVE.

By the middle of January, 1917, the front in Rumania had become stabilised on what was, in point of fact, General Alexieff's shortest line. This line had its right near Dorna Vatra* (the Russian left before Rumania intervened), and traversed the Carpathian foothills until it reached the Sereth Valley, north-east of the town of Focsani; thence it followed the left bank of the river to its junction with the Danube close to Galatz. East of this latter place the front was vague and variable, the swampy region round the Danube's mouths being a veritable "No Man's Land."

Nearly a million Russian soldiers had, by this time, been sent into Moldavia; they were organised in thirteen cavalry divisions and a dozen army corps. The Rumanian Army had been reduced by losses and disorganisation to six weak divisions; these held a sector of the front about twenty miles in length.

Winter weather and mutual exhaustion precluded the immediate continuation of hostilities, and the opposing armies faced each other under conditions of discomfort which could hardly have been worse.

During this period of comparative calm, it was possible to appreciate the situation both from an Allied and an enemy point of view.

* Dorna Vatra is a town in the Carpathians on the S.W. frontier of Bukovina.

The Allies had, undoubtedly, lost prestige. Great Britain had forfeited the confidence which had been our most precious asset in the earlier stages of the war; the British Government was regarded by Rumanians as the tool of French and Russian diplomacy, and our warmest partisans found little comfort in benevolent intentions which were never translated into deeds. The French buried criticism, to some extent, by an immense display of energy. Hundreds of officers and men were incorporated in the Rumanian Army, who by their spirit and example did much to raise the morale of the troops. The Russians, to a greater degree than ever, inspired distrust and fear. The Germanophiles in Rumania had always been Russophobes; during this period they gained many new adherents, both in the army and the business class.

Allied prestige, and more especially that of Great Britain, could have been restored by a decisive success in a direction which would have enabled Rumania to recommence hostilities, in the spring or summer, independently of Russia. That direction was obviously Constantinople, the key of the Near East; no other remedy for Rumania's plight was either practicable or just.

The loss of Wallachia had deprived Rumania of four-fifths of her food supplies, almost all her petrol and her principal railway centres. Moldavia had to support, in addition to the normal population, thousands of refugees from Wallachia and, to a great extent, the Russian forces. So defective were the road and railway communications, that the supply services functioned only with the greatest difficulty while the troops remained at rest. To attempt to even utilise this region as an advanced base for offensive operations was to invite defeat. Operations on a large scale for the recovery of Wallachia could only have

been carried out by using the Danube as a supplementary line of communications; to do so, it was essential for the Allies to be undisputed masters of the Black Sea, and this involved a reinforcement of the Russian Fleet. While the Dardanelles remained in enemy hands, the Black Sea was as much German and Turkish as it was Russian; naval engagements were of rare occurrence and invariably indecisive.

Speculation was busy at Rumanian Headquarters as to the invaders' future course of action. If further conquests were envisaged, their position on the Danube conferred on them the power of turning the left flank of the Sereth line by the occupation of Galatz, against which place their communications by rail and river would have made possible the rapid concentration of numerically superior forces. Once in possession of Galatz, the invasion of Bessarabia could have been undertaken, since the establishment of an Allied front on the line of the River Pruth* would have been forestalled.

The Central Empires, however, made no serious effort to capture Galatz; they appeared to be content with Braila and complete control of the Danube Valley between that port and the Iron Gate. From a strategical point of view their position was good. An immense force of Russians was immobilised in Moldavia and held there by the threat to Odessa; this force could only be freed for offensive operations by a complete reversal of Allied policy in the Near East, a contingency not likely to occur. In the meantime, the stocks of corn in Wallachia were being transferred to Germany and restorative measures were being taken in the oil fields, where the machinery and plant had been destroyed in wholesale fashion during the retreat.

* The River Pruth defines part of the frontier between Rumania and Bessarabia and enters the Danube at Galatz. •

Famine was approaching in Moldavia, and typhus was raging in the towns and countryside, when the Allies convened a conference at Petrograd to determine their future plans.

General Gourko had replaced General Alexieff as Chief of the Russian Staff, owing to the illness of the latter. At the outset of the Conference, Russia's principal military delegate submitted an appreciation of the military situation which, in so far as it concerned Rumania, either displayed an inexcusable ignorance of the facts or was intentionally false. He described new railway lines in Bessarabia as approaching completion, whose construction could not be commenced before the spring was far enough advanced to melt the ice and snow; on such premises as these he based a plan of operations, which even *Russian* Generals on the spot described as suicide. The other Allied representatives listened with grateful ears; for them, a Russo-Rumanian offensive in the spring had many great advantages—it would relieve the pressure on the Western front and help Cadorna on the Carso. If the General Staff in Petrograd thought this offensive could be made, it was the best solution of the problem, and all that remained for them to do was to arrange for liberal supplies of war material and guns.

It is difficult to believe that the Government of the Czar, had it survived, would have permitted this offensive to take place; a few ambitious Generals may have been in favour of it, but the rulers of Russia had realised that autocracies, which made war, on the Central Empires, were undermining the last barrier against the advancing flood of democratic sentiment, and were, in fact, cutting their own throats. Both at the Imperial Court and in Government circles, German influence was gaining ground, and the Russian people as a whole were profoundly pessimistic. Germany

was considered irresistible, officers of high rank admitted that if Mackensen invaded Bessarabia, salvation could be found only in retreat. They talked of a retirement to the Volga even, and the Rumanians listened with dismay.

In all human probability, the proposals for an offensive made to the Conference at Petrograd were intended to deceive the Western Allies, and to gain time for the final liquidation of Rumania. Already the Russian Government controlled Rumania's supplies of ammunition,* and, by an adroit interpretation of Articles VIII. and IX.† of the Military Convention, the Rumanian Army had, for all practical purposes, been brought under the Russian High Command. The next step was to assume control of the Rumanian civil administration, on the pretext that the confusion and congestion on the Moldavian railway system would preclude offensive operations, the Russian General Staff suggested a wholesale evacuation of Rumanian elements from Moldavia into Russian territory. This evacuation was to include the Government, the civil population, and all military units not actually on the front. Apart from its total impracticability with the communications available, the object of this suggestion was sufficiently clear—it was the conversion of Moldavia into a Russian colony. When that had been accomplished, a separate peace could be concluded between Russia and the Central Empires, and the prophecy of Baron von der Busche‡ would have been amply verified.

* About 60 per cent. of the supplies of ammunition sent by the Western Powers to Roumania were lost or stolen in transit through Russia.

† These Articles prescribed the position of the King of Rumania as Commander-in-Chief of all forces in Roumanian territory. After the retreat into Moldavia, advantage was taken of the somewhat inexplicit character of these Articles and the preponderance of Russian troops to place King Ferdinand under the orders of the Czar.

‡ The former German Minister to Bucharest.

During the proceedings of the Conference there had been much talk of revolution, but few of the Allied representatives believed in it. Society in Petrograd scoffed at the idea of a political upheaval, it was held to be impossible while the lower classes were so prosperous and comparatively well fed. At the end of February the Conference broke up, the British, French and Italian delegates left by the Murmansk route, convinced that, at last, the Russian "steam roller" was going to advance.

A few days later the Revolution began. The soldiers joined the people. Their motives for so doing were natural and logical, they should have been a lesson to those who were next to try to rule in Russia, if vanity and false ideas had not conspired to make Kerensky the puppet of occidental plans. Many senior generals supported the Revolution. Their motives were variously ascribed to patriotism and ambition—when generals and soldiers act alike a distinction must be drawn.

Western democracies gave an enthusiastic reception to the new order in Russia—so much so that our Ambassador in Petrograd, of all men the most innocent and above suspicion, was accused of complicity in the revolutionary plot. Liberals spoke of the awakening of Russia, and they were absolutely right. It was, indeed, an awakening of oppressed, exploited people, and was thorough, abrupt and rude. Officials in Paris and London were not without misgivings, but they perceived some advantages in the situation—a central soviet at Petrograd, or even a Republic, ruled by idealists, would be a more docile instrument than the Government of the Czar. Superficially, they were right. This shortsighted view was justified by events during the first four months of confusion and excitement. Fundamentally, they were wrong. They had misjudged the Revolution, and had not recognised that

lassitude and exasperation pervaded the Russian armies, and that men in this frame of mind were better left alone.

The fate of Rumania had trembled in the balance when left to the tender mercies of the men who ruled in Russia under the old regime. The Revolution had brought a chance of respite, and admitted a ray of hope. Great Britain and France could have helped the Rumanian people, by using their influence to insist on strict adherence to the terms of the Military Convention. If this had been done, and if patience and foresight had been exercised, the natural desire of the Army and the Government, to take an active part in the reconquest of their territory, might have been gratified on sane strategic lines. The Rumanian Army might have been reorganised and re-equipped, and then could have played a useful part in a concerted Allied plan.

This was not to be. The Allied plan was fixed and immutable. Though everything had changed in Russia, this plan was the direct outcome of Gourko's fantasies: it consisted in a gigantic offensive operation, without adequate communications and with ill-equipped armies, on more than one hundred miles of front. The Rumanian forces were to be wedged between two Russian armies and thus deprived of the power of independent movement, while their rôle was limited to that of an insignificant fraction of an incoherent mass. Ignorance and optimism ruled the Allied Councils; they were to be as fatal to Rumanian interests as Russian guile and greed.

I returned to Jassy from Petrograd towards the middle of March. The Russian forces in Moldavia had caught the revolutionary infection; their Commander-in-Chief, a Russian prince, had found prudence to be the better part of valour and assisted at committee meetings wearing a red cockade. Revolution

softens the manners and customs of even the most violent natures. Officers, who a few months before had kicked their soldiers in the streets for not saluting, now, when they got a rare salute, returned it with gratitude.

The Rumanian peasants remained faithful to their King and Government. They had suffered much, but their pride of race and native sense prevented them from flattering the hated intruders by imitating Russian methods for the redress of wrongs. In Jassy, some Socialists who had been arrested were liberated by their friends: these may have included some Rumanians, but their number was not considerable and their activities were not a source of danger to the commonwealth, which was threatened only from outside.

On the front an extraordinary situation had arisen. Fraternisation between the opposing armies was general and unrestrained, except on the Rumanian sector. The Russian soldiers were in regular correspondence with their Austrian and German adversaries, by means of post-boxes placed between the lines and verbal intercourse. Men, whose respective Governments were still at war, fished in the waters of the Sereth. "Angling is somewhat like poetry, men are to be born so." No doubt these anglers thought, with Isaac Walton, that they were brothers of the angle. Barbed wire was put to peaceful uses, entanglements were used as drying lines and were covered with fluttering shirts. The revolution had accomplished something; it had given some very dirty soldiers the time to wash their clothes.

A unique opportunity for propaganda had presented itself. The Germans utilised it to circulate letters inviting the Russian and Rumanian soldiers to desert their "real enemies"—France and England. These appeals had no effect. The Russians received them

philosophically; they had, already, got a sort of peace and, in the front-line trenches, a sufficiency of food. The Rumanians had other reasons for rejecting such advice. Peace with invaders had no meaning for them; their only friends were France and England. The peasants realised instinctively that Russia was a foe.

In their impatience for offensive action, the Allies failed to grasp some essential features of the situation, which might have been turned to good account. The Russian armies were in a state of convalescence after the first fever of the revolution, the majority of the men were inert, if not contented, and no longer indulged in deeds of violence; they were still influenced by the revolutionary spirit, but not in a rabid sense. They were a source of contagion to the enemy but, relatively, harmless to themselves. Fraternisation on the Rumanian front was more hurtful to the Central Empires than to the Allies. The Austro-Hungarians were war-weary and demoralised; inactivity had encouraged hopes of peace and, after close on three years of war, such hopes die hard. Even the Germans were disaffected, their iron discipline had grown more lax. During one of my visits to the Russian trenches, a German private brought a message from his comrades, advising the "Soldiers' Committee" to cease passing convoys along a certain road, because "our pigs of officers may make us shoot."

Disintegrating forces were at work among the enemy troops; they were the product of social and political conditions and, whatever might be their later repercussion, from an immediate and practical point of view, they were more powerful aids to victory for the Allies than any offensive on this front. A premature Russo-Rumanian offensive, with unwilling Russian soldiers, could have but one effect—its futility was evident to the humblest combatants in the opposing

ranks; it could only serve to rally doubters and, thereby, postpone another revolution. That revolution was inevitable: it might have been precipitated by an intelligent adaptation of Allied policy to facts.

So far as could be seen, the Allies had no policy at this period. Statesmen no longer ruled. The German system had been followed by making the General Staffs omnipotent. To men obsessed by one single facet of a many-sided problem, the Russian Revolution was an incident without significance beyond its bearing on the Western Front; for them the Russian armies were machines, whose functions had undergone no change as the result of revolution. They regarded an offensive on the Eastern Front as a subsidiary operation, which would relieve the pressure in the West: that was the aim and object of their strategy, and everything was subordinated to the achievement of that end.

With very few exceptions, the Russian Generals who had retained commands, after the abdication of the Czar, favoured the Allied plan; it appealed not only to their personal ambition but also to a conviction, which they shared with many others, that further slaughter would allay political unrest. The most influential member of the new Russian Government was Kerensky, an idealist whose support for any enterprise could be secured by flattering his vanity, which, as with many democratic leaders, had assumed the proportions of disease. The motives of this man were comparatively disinterested, but he was young and inexperienced. He became the most ardent advocate of the offensive plan and turned himself into a recruiting sergeant instead of directing the affairs of State. Brains and calm judgment are seldom used in war. It is much easier to enrol thousands of simple men to serve in what the Russians called "Battalions of Death" than it is to find one man possessed of sense. Kerensky raised many such battalions and, to do him

justice, he did not deceive the victims of his eloquence more completely than himself.

In Rumania hope alternated with despair in regard to future operations; the former was spasmodic and inspired by the French Military Mission, the latter was bound to invade any reflective mind. Certain Rumanian Generals were frankly optimistic in regard to the reconquest of Wallachia, others professed to be so to gain the approval of the French. With either of these two types discussion was impossible; it would have been cruel to rob them of any source of consolation by insisting on the truth.

General Ragosa, who commanded the 2nd Russian Army, expressed himself emphatically against a renewal of offensive tactics by Russian troops, before they had been equipped on the same scale as other armies. He declared that Brusiloff's much advertised offensives had been conducted without due preparation or regard for loss of life, and that though that general had gained much personal glory, he had broken the spirit of his men. The attitude of the rank and file more than confirmed this view; the revolutionary soldiers lacked neither patriotism nor courage, but they had come to suspect and hate the blundering, ruthless generals who held their lives so cheap. They knew that on the Western Front slaughter was mitigated by mechanical devices, whereas they were regarded as mere cannon fodder and of less value than their transport mules. When French and British officers urged them to make further sacrifices, they put a searching question: "Do your soldiers pull down barbed wire entanglements with their bare hands?" Such questions were disconcerting to fervent foreign propagandists, and did not stimulate their curiosity to hear other unpleasant truths. In spite of the fact that "Soldiers' Committees" had been established in almost every unit, and were largely, though not

completely, representative, these spokesmen of a mass of inarticulate opinion were neglected by the partisans of immediate offensive action, who seemed to have forgotten that the Russian Revolution had ever taken place.

Once again, the Western Powers were asking the armies on the Eastern Front to do what their own armies would not have been allowed to do. Their motives were selfish and their propaganda false: when ignorance is wilful it becomes immoral, when combined with mediocrity of mind, it fails to recognise the natural limitations of a situation and has a boomerang effect. Wise men, however immoral they may be, know where to stop; the stupid, when unrestrained by fear or scruples, push blindly on and never seek enlightenment, they cause more suffering by their folly than the most cruel tyrants by their vice.

At the beginning of July the offensive began; by some it was called the "French" offensive, and the name was not inapt. It came as a surprise to the enemy Army Commanders, who had not expected this solution of a problem whose political aspects were causing them grave concern. The Austro-Hungarian and German soldiers could still be counted on to retaliate if attacked; this sudden onslaught put an end to the fraternisation between the armies and could be dealt with easily by even an inferior number of well-led and well-organised troops.

The history of these ill-fated operations is too well known to need recapitulation. By the end of July the Russo-Rumanian offensive had collapsed completely. The Russian forces were everywhere in retreat, the Rumanians, after making a twelve mile advance and fighting with great gallantry and determination, were forced to withdraw to the line from which they had started, owing to the retirement of the Russian armies on both their flanks.

A total misconception of the internal situation in Russia had brought about a military disaster of unprecedented magnitude. The Russian armies had ceased to exist as fighting forces, the soldiers had flung away their arms and offered no opposition to invasion, all Western Russia was at the mercy of the Germans, who had only to advance.

With the disappearance of all military cohesion, the political situation in Russia became desperate. The dumb driven herd had, in the end, stampeded and put the herdsmen in a fearful quandary, from which there was no escape. Millions of men had demobilised themselves and roved about the country or poured into the towns, they had been brutalised by three years of war and showed it by their deeds. Six months before the Russian people had lost confidence in themselves. With a new form of Government new hope had come, but now that hope was dashed. Russian Democracy had been tried and failed. Kerensky and his fellows had destroyed an evil system, but had put nothing but rhetoric in its place. They had convinced themselves that they were Russia's saviours, and had not realised that revolutions which are caused by war have but one object—a return to peace. They might have saved the situation by a temporising policy; far greater men have not disdained inaction based on calculation, and Russia's history had shown that in her wide and distant spaces lay her most sure defence. Instead, the leaders of the Revolution, having no Russian policy, had embarked on an enterprise which every thinking Russian knew was foredoomed to failure; thereby they had destroyed the trust of the people in their Western Allies, who had become objects of resentment, for having urged the last offensive without regard for ways and means.

To distracted soldiers, workmen and peasants in all parts of Russia, the Bolshevik doctrine made a strong

appeal; it promised not only peace, but a form of self-government, and these leaderless, misgoverned men snatched eagerly at the prospect. Lenin and Trotsky had long perceived the real need of the Russian people, their international theories effaced any sentiments of loyalty to the Allies, and, after a sweeping away the last vestiges of Kerensky's Government, they asked Germany for an armistice.

In Southern Moldavia, the Rumanians still held their ground, covering the crossings of the Sereth. They were completely isolated—on one side anarchy, on the other a ring of steel. The situation of this dismembered country was tragic and appalling; in the words of the Prophet Isaiah, Rumania was "as the small dust of the balance." Her fate was linked with that of Russia, she was small dust indeed, compared to that ponderous mass.

The impatience of the Western Powers had exposed Rumania to the machinations of a haughty, overbearing ally and an enemy in disguise. From these the Revolution had delivered her, but only in the hour of defeat and on the eve of irretrievable disaster. She was to drain the cup of bitterness down to its very dregs, and, at the bidding of the Bolsheviks, to conclude a separate peace.

It has been said that the Bolsheviks betrayed Rumania. This accusation is unfounded and unjust. The Bolsheviks were the outcome of a pernicious system, for which the Revolution had found no remedy; Rumania had undoubtedly been betrayed, but the betrayal was not Lenin's work. When he assumed control in Russia, Rumania's plight was hopeless, and, at least, he left her what she might have lost—the status of an Independent State.

The Alliance had lost a limb which spread across two Continents and bestrode the Eastern world. Its strength had been exaggerated, but it had rendered

priceless services at the outset of the war. At last it had broken down from overwork, directed by men who had neither understood its functions nor realised that it was something human, though different from the rest. • The Russian people had not changed with a change of Government, but the same men were abused as traitors under Lenin, who had been praised as patriots and heroes when subjects of the Czar.

The amputation had been self-inflicted, and the limb was left to rot.

CHAPTER XIII.

A MIDNIGHT MASS.

ON Easter Eve, it is the practice of the Orthodox Greek Church to hold a Special Vigil, which terminates at midnight on Holy Saturday. In the year 1917 this vigil had unusual significance for the Rumanian people, who were passing through a time of tribulation, the words "Kyrie Eleison"* were in every heart, and even the irreligious sought the solace of Mother Church.

I had been with the Armies, and had returned to Jassy late on Easter Saturday. My way had lain through almost deserted country, with here and there a sparsely populated village, whose tolling church bells called the peasants to their prayers.

The Moldavian capital was densely crowded. Since early in the evening, a great concourse had been assembling in the Cathedral Square. At the time of my arrival, thousands of patient waiting people stood there, a sea of faces blanched in the moonlight, pinched by want and cold. Many Russian soldiers were sharing in this outer vigil. Just before midnight, after the King and Queen had entered the Cathedral, some of them broke through the cordon of Rumanian troops and tried to force an entrance. They also wished to worship in accordance with the ritual of their church, but were held back and roughly handled. There was not room for all who wished to

* "Kyrie Eleison," the Greek for "Lord have mercy on us," described by Cardinal Wiseman as "that cry for mercy which is to be found in every liturgy of East and West."

enter in, and these were soldiers of the Revolution wearing the red cockade. One of them, quite a boy in years, fell prostrate and inarticulate on the steps, and was permitted to remain.

The vigil ended shortly after midnight, and at its close the Archbishop led a procession to the precincts, where massed bands played, rockets soared high in Heaven, and true believers kissed each other, saying: "Christ is risen."

Once more we entered the Cathedral, and what I have called a Midnight Mass or Liturgy was celebrated. The term may well be a misnomer. There may not have been a mystical destruction, but there were prayers of penitence and praise, of supplication and thanksgiving, and these we are taught are the four ends of the sacrifice of the Mass.

Jassy Cathedral is not one of those vast Gothic structures, whose symmetry and gorgeous decoration serve as memorials of the inspired human efforts which graced a more religious age. It is a plain unostentatious building of no great size. This night, however, it appeared transformed; height, length and breadth assumed immense, mysterious proportions—the chancel blazed with light, all other parts of the interior of the building were wrapped in obscurity, side chapels loomed like cavernous recesses, the nave was filled with flickering shadows, its vault resembled a dark firmament above a tense expectant multitude, a seemingly innumerable host, stretching far back in serried lines and ever deepening gloom.

Rumanian soldiers predominated in the congregation, the radiance from the altar was reflected on swart, fierce faces, and shone in countless eyes. Queen Mary, surrounded by her ladies, stood near the centre of the transept, a group of white-clad figures gleaming softly against the grey background. The King and his second son occupied two thrones on the south side

of the chancel, facing them were the representatives of seven Allied States.

At the commencement of the service the music was subdued, treble and alto voices recited canticles and chanted antiphons. Sometimes a clear soprano rang out alone. I could not understand the words, but one of the melodies recalled an air by Handel, a touching declaration of faith triumphant, a woman's voice proclaiming that her Redeemer lives. Later, the character of the music changed. From a gallery at the Cathedral's western end, a choir of men thundered out pæans of rejoicing, which rose in shattering crescendos, and surged up to the altar in waves of sonorous sound.

The climax of the ceremony was reached when the Archbishop left the altar steps and knelt before the King. The old Primate's work was done. This learned monk and priest of God was a Rumanian citizen. As such he surrendered to his temporal sovereign the symbol of all Christendom, and his own most sacred charge. King Ferdinand received it reverently, and a Catholic Hohenzollern Prince stood as the Head of Church and State holding a jewelled cross.

An unexpected movement followed. Most of the foreign diplomats and soldiers pressed round the Royal throne, and paid homage to both spiritual and temporal power by kissing first the crucifix and then the Monarch's hand.

This gesture was neither premeditated nor prompted by a spirit of Erastianism. It was the act of men under the influence of deep emotion. Something had touched their hearts; something, perhaps, which brought back memories of boyhood, when belief was ready, and young imaginations glowed, and youth was vowed to noble deeds; something which stirred feelings numbed by contact with worldliness and cruelty on life's rough way; something, still fragrant and

redolent of innocence, which they had lost long since and found awhile.

To the peasant soldiers, the music, the incense and the vestments combined to make a beatific vision, a light to those who walked in darkness, and whose simple faith was strong and real. They believed implicitly in the second advent of a man who had been, and would be again—Wonderful, a Counsellor, a Good Shepherd, and a Prince of Peace. They had known sorrow and defeat, the enemy was in their land, famine and pestilence were ravaging their homes, but they were soldiers of the Cross and undismayed. More battles would be fought, battles without the pomp and circumstance of those in theatres less remote. The last heroic stand at Marasesti* would be made by humble men, who, this night throughout Moldavia, were met together for a festival of their Church, not to sing songs of lamentation, but to cry Hallelujah and Hosanna, to tell the joyful tidings—"Christ is risen."

* Marasesti is a village in the Sereth Valley, where six Rumanian divisions repelled repeated assaults by numerically superior German and Austro-Hungarian forces under Field-Marshal Mackensen. The Rumanians fought unsupported and caused 100,000 casualties in the enemy ranks. They held their positions until the signature of peace at Bucharest.

CHAPTER XIV

" WESTERNERS " AND " EASTERNERS. "

FOR many years before the " Great World War," the German Army had been the most formidable fighting machine in existence. It had filled professional soldiers in all countries with envy and admiration, as the supreme expression of a warlike and disciplined race.

When the war began the Allied Armies were unprepared, and were unable to withstand an offensive which was a triumph of scientific organisation and almost achieved complete success. The partial success of this first German offensive had two important results: it carried the war on the Western Front into French and Belgian territory, and more than confirmed the worst fears of Allied military experts as to the efficiency of the German Army.

After the Battle of the Marne, a mood of extravagant optimism prevailed. One British general prophesied in September, 1914, that by the end of March, 1915, the Russians would be on the Oder and the French and British on the Rhine. With the advent of trench warfare on the Western Front and the retreat of the Russians in East Prussia and Poland, the outlook became less rosy, and the Allies settled down to a form of war which was to last, with slight variations, until the armistice.

Generally speaking, this form of war involved the subordination of Policy to Grand Tactics. Policy had for its object the protection of vital interests, more especially in the East, and aimed at securing the

co-operation of neutral States with a 'view to strengthening the Alliance. Grand Tactics demanded the sacrifice of every consideration to ensuring victory on the Western Front. The failure of the expedition to the Dardanelles put statesmen, for a time at least, at the mercy of professional soldiers, of whom the vast majority, both French and British, were 'so-called "Westerners."

The ideas of these men were simple. If pursued to their logical conclusion they would have required the concentration of all Allied forces (including Serbs and Russians) somewhere in France and Flanders. The more rabid Westerners did desire this, as they honestly believed that on their front there was no middle course between a decisive victory and a crushing defeat. Others admitted a Russian, and later an Italian Front with its appendage at Salonika, but, in their eyes, the only object of these two fronts was to hold as many enemy troops as possible and facilitate a victory in the West. That victory was to be preceded by a war of attrition, which would culminate in a final battle on classic lines—the infantry and artillery would make a gap through which massed cavalry would pour.

The French Staff was characteristically optimistic, the British less so. Many senior British officers had a profound respect for the German Military System, it was to them the embodiment of excellence from every point of view, and had to be imitated before it could be beaten.

In the autumn of 1915, the era of Allied counter-offensives began. The slaughter on both sides was immense, but no appreciable results were achieved. While these operations were being carried out, Bulgaria joined the Central Empires, the greater part of Serbia and Albania was over-run, and, according to an 'official

report on the operations against the Dardanelles, “ the flow of munitions and drafts fell away.”

Throughout the whole of 1916, the war of attrition was waged in deadly earnest and exacted a ghastly toll. By the end of the year no decision had been reached on the three main fronts, but the richest part of Rumania had fallen into the hands of the enemy.

Public opinion in both France and Great Britain seemed to approve the methods of the Westerners. The French naturally desired above everything to drive the invaders out of France, and the British people had become resigned to a war of workshops, which was lucrative to those who stayed at home.

From a purely military point of view, the attitude of the Westerners was comprehensible. The Western Front was close to the Allied bases of supply, it had good communications, the climate was healthy, on this front the Germans were encountered, and they formed the backbone of the hostile combination. Undoubtedly a victory in the West was the ideal way to win the war. No one disputed that, but at the end of 1916 that victory was still remote. Germany's position on the Western Front was very strong, her army was homogeneous, her communications were superior to ours, and her recent conquests in the East had mitigated the effects of two years of blockade.

Since September, 1914, both sets of belligerents had made offensives, but these had failed, though in each case an initial success had raised the highest hopes. Stupendous preparations had been made, artillery had been employed on an unprecedented scale, lives had been sacrificed ruthlessly, but, invariably, the forward movement had been arrested, had ebbed a little and immobility had ensued. Some law appeared to operate in this most modern form of warfare. Killing without manœuvre had become an exact science, but battles are not merely battues, the armies must

advance, and this they could not do—their mass^{ed} and the enormous assemblage of destructive appliances, necessary for the preliminary process of annihilation, produced a congestion which brought the best organised offensives to a standstill. In such circumstances it seemed that final victory might be postponed for months and even years.

Time pressed. The Central Empires held the land routes of South-Eastern Europe and Turkey was their vassal State, whereas the Allies disposed of precarious sea communications, which linked them with no more than the periphery of the Ottoman Empire and the Balkans at three widely separated points. In these regions the populations were being Germanised, inevitably and in spite of themselves. The Germans were on the spot, they might be arrogant and unsympathetic, but they were efficient, and suffering, unsophisticated people could justifiably argue that these intruders were better as friends than enemies, and that it paid to be on their side. To neglect this situation, until we had won a victory in the West, exposed the Allies to the risk of letting German influence become predominant throughout the Middle East. For the British Empire such a state of affairs would have spelt disaster; after untold sacrifices in the Allied cause, Great Britain would have lost the war.

These weighty considerations had influenced certain British statesmen ever since the intervention of Turkey on the side of the Central Empires, but their plans had been frustrated by official inertia and mismanagement. In 1917, a serious effort was made to restore our prestige in the East by operations in the direction of Palestine and in Mesopotamia. These operations were against the same enemy and were carried out almost exclusively by British forces, but were independent of each other and not part of a concerted plan. The British War Office had undertaken the supply and

maintenance of three " side-shows " (including Salonika), but had neither the time nor the inclination to prepare a scheme for the co-ordination of operations in the Eastern theatres. Perhaps it was feared that such a scheme would involve the despatch of reinforcements.

The Eastern situation demanded, in the first place, statesmanship. A military policy was needed which, while recognising the preponderating importance of securing the Western Front, would aim at bringing pressure to bear on every part of the enemy combination; which would not be content with local successes, but would attack Pan-Germanism, the real menace to the British Empire, where its activities were centred; which would strike at Germany through her Near Eastern allies, complete the circle of blockade on land and retrieve the sources of supply which had been taken from Rumania.

Military operations alone would not suffice; the co-operation of the navy was essential to reduce the risks from submarines which infested the Eastern Mediterranean. The shipping problem presented many difficulties. These could be overcome only by Governmental action based on policy. If dealt with by subordinate officials, the distribution of available tonnage would follow the line of least resistance in the form of short trips to France.

If the broad lines of an Eastern policy had been laid down and insisted on by the Allied Governments, a plan could have been put into execution which, while offensive operations were in progress in Mesopotamia, Palestine and Macedonia, would have directed against the heart of the Ottoman Empire a strategic reserve, concentrated with that objective in view at one or more of the Eastern Mediterranean ports. The force required would not have been considerable. The Turkish and Bulgarian armies were held on three

distant fronts, leaving weak and scattered garrisons in Constantinople, Thrace, and the defences of the Dardanelles.

The difficulties were many, but the stakes were big. The fall of Constantinople would have revolutionised the Near Eastern situation. It would have forced Turkey to make a separate peace, and would, thereby, have freed a large proportion of our forces in Palestine and Macedonia for employment in other theatres. It would have had an immediate effect in Bulgaria, where the resentment against Germany, on account of the partitioning of the Dobrudja, was bitter and widespread. It would have opened up communications by sea with the Rumanian and Russian armies in Moldavia, and made it possible to maintain and quicken the Southern Russian front. An opportunity would have presented itself for settling the Macedonian question on its merits, the Western Powers would have been the arbiters, and their decisions would have been respected as those of all-powerful allies or potential conquerors. A just settlement of this question could not have failed to secure the neutrality of Bulgaria.

Any Balkan settlement, which fulfilled our treaty and moral obligations to Rumania and Serbia respectively, involved the partial dismemberment of Austria-Hungary. An invasion of the Eastern and South-Western provinces of the Dual Monarchy was the natural corollary of an Eastern military policy. This invasion could have been effected by national armies advancing towards their ethnological frontiers. The Rumanians, after the reconquest of Wallachia, could have operated in Transylvania and along the Danube Valley towards the Banat. The Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina towards the Dalmatian Coast. In all these provinces the populations were awaiting

with impatience the arrival of the Allies to throw off the hated yoke of Austria-Hungary.

Unquestionably, operations of this nature would have a repercussion in Croatia and Bohemia, where the inhabitants were disaffected and ready to revolt. Their attitude would have facilitated an extension of the invasion in the direction of Trieste. The occupation of Trieste would have completed the encirclement of German Austria and Germany. The German Western front would have been turned strategically, policy and strategy working in harmony, could have undertaken the task of isolating Prussia, the centre of militarism and the birthplace of Pan-Germanism. Munich and Dresden are closer to Trieste than to any point in France or Flanders.

Such, in brief outline, was an Eastern military policy which had been submitted repeatedly since the early stages of the war. It was first proposed as a complement to the operations on the Western and Eastern fronts. With the intervention of Italy, the possibility of its extension towards Croatia and Istria was perceived. At the beginning of 1917 it did not involve the detachment of many additional divisions from other theatres. The aggregate casualties in one of the big offensives would have more than met requirements. This detachment could have been justified on strategical grounds, since it would have forced the enemy to conform to at least an equal extent. It was an attempt to harmonise strategy with policy, and on the principle of *solvitur ambulando* to deal, during the progress of the war, with a host of vexed racial problems which, during an armistice or in time of peace, are surrounded by intrigue.

The advocates of an Eastern policy were described as “ Easterners,” a term which was susceptible of various interpretations. It meant, at best, a visionary,

at worst, a traitor, according to the degree of indignation inspired by heresies.

Notwithstanding the failure of their previous efforts, the "Westerners" still claimed in 1917 that a decisive victory could and would be won on the Western front, if the Russo-Rumanian offensive came up to expectations. They had organised the British nation for a special form of war. Thanks to a highly developed Intelligence Department, they knew exactly what they had to deal with. Hundreds of able-bodied officers had worked with all the ardour of stamp collectors at identifying enemy units, and had produced catalogues which in the judgment of archivists were impeccable, though at the time of issue they may have been out of date. The French Armies were commanded by the hero of Verdun,* and were full of the offensive spirit. The Italians were holding their own on the Carso and the Isonzo. The framework of the war was set, the far flung buckler of the Central Empires would be pierced where they were strongest, the Germans would be beaten by their own methods, and at any cost.

Once more the "Westerners" had their way. Once more their hopes were disappointed. At the end of 1917, in spite of local tactical successes, the Western front remained unbroken, the Italians had retreated to the line of the Piave, and the Eastern front had dissolved in the throes of revolution. In Palestine and Mesopotamia, the Allies had struck two heavy blows at Turkey, and the Ottoman Empire was drifting into chaos. A direct blow at Constantinople would have encountered slight opposition, it would have been welcomed by the masses of the people as a deliverance. In Macedonia the Bulgars were showing signs of disaffection, but here inaction, both military and

* General Nivelle.

diplomatic, continued the stalemate. The alliance of America had saved the financial situation, but no effective military support could be expected from this quarter for many months to come.

Fortunately for the British Empire and for civilisation, German policy was also controlled by "Westerners." These men were essentially experts, past masters of technique, but indifferent exponents of the military art when applied to a world-wide war. They had failed to seize their opportunity in 1914, when Paris and the Channel Ports were at their mercy. During 1915 and 1916 they had squandered lives and ammunition in costly offensives on the Western front, when they might have taken Petrograd. In 1917 they lacked the insight to perceive that their conquests on the Eastern front more than compensated the check to overweening aspirations in the West, which, owing to their past mistakes, could not be gratified. If at the end of 1917 the German Government had offered terms of peace, based on the evacuation of France and Belgium and including the cession of Alsace and Lorraine, and had during the winter months withdrawn their troops to the right bank of the Meuse, the Allied Governments could hardly have refused.

In France the drain on man-power had been appalling. A continuance of hostilities involving further losses would have aroused opposition in influential circles, and would have been denounced as illogical and quixotic, as a sacrifice of French interests on the altar of Great Britain, when peace could be had on advantageous terms. The position of the other Allies would have been difficult in the extreme. To continue the war in the West, without France as a base, would have been impossible. The only alternative would have been an intensification of the blockade and the operations in the Eastern theatres. These

operations would no longer have been confined to Turks and Bulgars, and new bases would have been required to mount them on a proper scale; further the non-existence of a comprehensive Eastern policy would have been a cause of much delay. America had not declared war against either Turkey or Bulgaria. The Italians had interests in the East; but, under these altered circumstances, their position on the Piave front would have been critical, and might have forced them to make peace. The Allied peoples were war weary, peace talk would have aroused their hopes, and have been more convincing than the arguments of Imperialists.

By proposing peace, the German Government might have lost prestige, but would have gained something more substantial—a secure position in the East. Instead, at the beginning of 1918, everything was sacrificed to a renewal of offensives on the Western front. The reinforcements asked for by Bulgaria were not sent, and Turkey was abandoned to her fate. Ominous mutterings from the working classes in Germany were disregarded. By rigorous application of the military system and by promises of victory, a clique of ambitious generals kept the German people well in hand.

If a frontal attack against a sector of an immense entrenched position could lead to decisive results, the German offensive of March, 1918, should have had the desired effect. It penetrated to within ten miles of Amiens, a vital point on the Allied communications, and there, in spite of the most prodigious efforts, it petred out. The ratio between the front of attack and the depth of advance had exceeded all previous records, but just as success seemed certain, human endurance reached its limits, and proved once more its subjugation to an inhuman and automatic law. The

British front had not been broken, though it had been badly bent.

• Undeterred by this dreadful and unavailing slaughter the German leaders persisted in their efforts, and staked the destiny of their country on one last gambler's throw. Four offensives had been repulsed, a fifth was now attempted with Paris as its goal. It was dictated by political, and possibly dynastic, considerations, and was not executed with customary German skill.

To close observers, it had for some time been apparent that German strategy was weakening. There had been less coherence in the operations, and symptoms of indecision on the part of the High Command. Field-Marshal Foch was undoubtedly a better strategist than any of his adversaries, and the war of movement, resulting from the German offensives, gave him an opportunity which he was not slow to seize. A series of hammer blows along the whole Western front deprived Ludendorff of the initiative which he had hitherto possessed, and forced the German armies to evacuate the salients in the direction of Paris and Amiens.

Other and more fundamental factors, however, had already undermined Germany's powers of resistance. The discontent among the masses of the German population had assumed menacing proportions; it affected the troops on the lines of communication directly, and through them the soldiers on the front. During the last offensives the number of men who surrendered voluntarily had been above the average, and when the retirement began, when all hopes of taking Paris in 1918 had disappeared, when American soldiers had been encountered, proving the failure of the submarine campaign, the spirit of the German Armies changed. Certain units still fought well, but

the majority of the German soldiers became untrustworthy, though not yet mutinous. An eye-witness relates that on their arrival at Chateau Thierry,* the German officers were in the highest spirits, and the words "Nach Paris"† were continually on their lips. The men, on the other hand, seemed depressed and moody, but when the order was issued for withdrawal, their demeanour brightened, they found a slogan full of portents, the words were "Nach Berlin"‡ and were uttered with a smile. This incident is authentic, it took place in July.

History was repeating itself, misgovernment by a selfish upper class had produced in Germany the same conditions which had driven the Russian people into revolution. In both countries a state of war had accentuated pre-existent evils, by giving a freer rein to those who exploit patriotism, courage and devotion for their personal ends. Germany had outlasted Russia because, in her military system, she had an almost perfect organisation from an administrative point of view. This system had enabled the German people to make incredible efforts, by concentrating all the resources of the nation on a single purpose and putting them at the disposal of a few resolute, all-powerful men. Had it been controlled by statesmen, total disruption might have been averted; directed by infatuated and homicidal militarists, its very excellence enabled it to hold the Empire in its grip until disaster was complete.

From June, 1918, onward, all hope of a German victory on the Western Front had disappeared. Germany was seething with discontent, her industrial life was paralysed, the supply of munitions had seriously decreased; yet Ludendorff persevered, he

* Chateau Thierry is a town on the Marne, and was the nearest point to Paris reached by the German offensive of July, 1918.

† To Paris. ‡ To Berlin.

drove the armies with remorseless energy, a kind of madness possessed him and his acolytes, imposing desperate courses and blinding them to facts. Their whole political existence was at stake, failure meant loss of place and power, of all that made life sweet, so they conceived a sinister design—if they failed “ all else should go to ruin and become a prey.”

When the crash came, it came from within. For months, the German armies on the front had been a façade screening a welter of misery and starvation. The machine had functioned soullessly, causing the useless massacre of thousands of soldiers, while women and children died by tens of thousands in the midst of fictitious opulence. During these last days, the rank and file fought without hope, for an Emperor who was to save himself by flight, for leaders who treated them like pawns, for the defence of hearths and homes where famine and disease were rife. Long years of discipline had made these men automatons, they were parts of a great projectile whose momentum was not yet exhausted, and they had long ceased to reason why.

Unreasoning docility is held by some to be a civic virtue: that was the German doctrine and the basis of their Military System, which, though at its inception a defensive system, became an instrument of conquest, pride and insolence, a menace to the world. The form of war which Germany initiated and perfected has degraded war itself, it has organised slaughter with mechanical devices, has made tanks of more account than brains, and has crowned the triumph of matter over mind. There was a redeeming glamour about war as made by Alexander and Napoleon, to-day it is a hideous butchery, which can be directed by comparatively mediocre men. It has ceased to be an art and has become an occupation inextricably interwoven with a nation's industrial life.

The downfall of the German Military System is a stern reminder of the vicissitude of things, and has removed a brooding shadow which darkened civilisation. If calamitous experience serves as a guide to statesmen in the future, its rehabilitation will be prevented—in any form, however specious, in any land.

CHAPTER XV.

1919. THE PEACE CONFERENCE AT PARIS.

"Until philosophers are kings, or the kings and princes of this world have the power and spirit of philosophy, and political greatness and wisdom meet in one, and those commoner natures which pursue either at the expense of the other are compelled to stand aside—cities will never rest from their evils, no—nor the human race, as I believe."

PLATO.

Four days before the official declaration of war on Germany by the Government of the United States, President Wilson made a speech before the American Congress which contained the following passage: * "We shall fight . . . for Democracy . . . for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free peoples as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free." A few months later the same spokesman of a free people declared: † "They (men everywhere) insist . . . that no nation or people shall be robbed or punished because the irresponsible rulers of a single country have themselves done deep and abominable wrong. . . . The wrongs . . . committed in this war . . . cannot and *must* not be righted by the commission of similar wrongs against Germany and her allies." • Later still, when the victory of Democracy had become certain, a forecast of the terms of peace was given by the same authoritative voice: ‡ "In four years of conflict the whole world

* Speech of April 2nd, 1917.

† Message of December 4th, 1917.

‡ Declaration of September 27th, 1918.

has been drawn in, and the common will of mankind has been substituted for the particular purposes of individual States. The issues must now be settled by no compromise or adjustment, but definitely and once for all. There must be a full acceptance of the principle that the interest of the weakest is as sacred as the interest of the strongest. That is what we mean when we speak of a permanent peace."

These and a number of similar utterances had produced a deep effect throughout the world. The ruling classes in Europe professed to regard them as merely propaganda, and not to be taken seriously, but they could not escape the uneasy consciousness that their own methods in the past were being arraigned before an unpleasantly public court of justice. Moderate opinion in all countries was disposed to welcome these bold statements of democratic principles as furnishing a convenient bridge to a more advanced stage in political evolution, views which would have been condemned as sentimental, and even anarchic in a humbler social reformer, on the lips of a President were considered as a statesman's recognition of the logic of hard facts. The masses thought they were the "plain people," for whom and to whom the President had spoken, and in their hearts had risen a great hope.

When Mr. Wilson first arrived in Europe huge crowds acclaimed him, and, making due allowance for the cynical, the curious and indifferent, these crowds contained a far from insignificant proportion of ardent, enthusiastic spirits, who welcomed him not as a President or a politician, but as the bearer of a message, not as a Rabbi with a doctrine made up of teachings in the synagogues, but as a latter-day Messiah, come to drive forth the money-changers and intriguers from the temple of a righteous peace. Eager idealists believed that the victory of democracy had set a period to the

evils resulting from autocratic forms of government, that with the termination of the war the topmost block had been placed on a pyramid of errors, that a real master-builder had appeared, who would lay the foundations of a cleaner, better world. They saw in him the champion of decency and morality, a doughty champion, strong in the backing of millions of free people, who had seen liberty in danger, and had sent their men across an ocean to fight for freedom in an older world in torment. They were grateful and offered him their services, loyally and unreservedly, asking but one thing—to be shown the way. History contains no parallel to this movement. Savonarola and Rienzi had appealed to local, or at most national feeling. Here was a man who stood for something universal and inspiring, who was more than a heroic priest, more than the tribune of a people, a man who, while enjoying personal security, could speak and act for the welfare of all peoples in the name of right. For such causes, men in the past have suffered persecution and have been faithful unto death.

No Peace Conference has ever undertaken a more stupendous task than that which confronted the delegates of the Allied States in Paris in January, 1919. Central Europe was seething with revolution and slowly dying of starvation. Beyond lay Russia, unknown yet full of portents, more terrible to many timorous souls than ever Germany had been. The war had come to a sudden and unexpected end, and enemy territory had not been invaded save at extremities which were not vital points. The Central Empires and their Allies had collapsed from internal causes. Germany and Austria could not, for the moment, oppose invasion, which had lost all its terrors for distracted populations, who hoped that French and British soldiers would, by their presence, maintain law and order and ensure supplies of food. On the

other hand, neither the Serbs nor the Rumanians had had their territorial aspirations satisfied during the progress of the war. Both races had followed the usual Balkan custom by invading the territories they claimed during the armistice; this method, when employed against Hungarians, involved the use of force; it also embittered relations between themselves where, as in the Banat, their claims clashed and overlapped. Further north, the Czecho-Slovaks had proclaimed their independence, and Poland was being resurrected; the frontiers of both these States were vague and undefined, but their appetities were unlimited, and Teschen, with its coalfields, was a pocket in dispute.

Not only had the Peace Conference to endeavour to prevent excessive and premature encroachment on enemy territory by Allied States, it had also to compose serious differences between the Western Powers in regard to the Adriatic coast, Syria, and Asia Minor arising out of secret treaties.

These considerations, though embarrassing for the representatives of Great Britain, France and Italy, did not affect President Wilson to the same extent; in fact they rather strengthened his position and confirmed the expectation that he would be the real arbiter of the Conference. His speeches had, in the opinion of innumerable men and women, indicated the only solution of the world-problem. The "Fourteen Points" had outlined, without inconvenient precision, a settlement of international questions; he was the head of a State untrammelled by secret treaties, the only State not on the verge of bankruptcy, a State which could furnish both moral and material aid. When M. Albert Thomas said that the choice lay between Wilson and Lenin, he may have been guilty of exaggeration, but he expressed a feeling which was general and real. Whether that feeling was justified, the future alone will show.

In the Declaration of September 27, 1918, President Wilson stated: "All who sit at the Peace table must be ready to pay the price, and the price is impartial justice, no matter whose interest is crossed." Later on in the same Declaration he added: "the indispensable instrumentality is a 'League of Nations,' but it cannot be formed now." Five conditions of peace were set forth; of these, the third laid down that there could be no alliances or covenants within the League of Nations, and the Declaration concluded with an appeal to the Allies: "I hope that the leaders of the Allied Governments will speak as plainly as I have tried to speak, and say whether my statement of the issues is in any degree mistaken."

The inference, drawn by the ordinary man after perusing this Declaration, was that its author expected the Conference to deal with each and every question on its merits, that the "League of Nations" would eventually be the instrument employed in reaching the final settlement, and that, following on the establishment of the League, all previous alliances would cease to exist and future alliances would be precluded. The questioning form of the concluding sentence suggested doubts as to the attitude of the Associated Powers, but the presence of the President at the peace table served as presumptive evidence that those doubts had been set at rest.

A "League of Nations" was, undoubtedly, the ideal instrument for achieving a just settlement of the many and varied questions which confronted the Peace Conference, but a "League," or "Society of Nations" as defined by Lord Robert Cecil,* could not be created before the conclusion of a Preliminary Peace with

* In a speech at Birmingham University on December 12, 1918, Lord Robert Cecil said: "Our new 'Society of Nations' must not be a group, however large and important. It is absolutely essential that the 'League of Nations' should be open to every nation which can be trusted by its fellows to accept 'ex animo,' the principles and basis of such a Society."

Germany and her Allies, with, as its corollary, the inclusion of, at least, Germany, Austria, and Hungary, within the League; in the words of Lord Robert Cecil, such a Society would be incomplete, and proportionately ineffective, unless every civilised State joined it.

The formation of a full-fledged League required time. Further, in the frame of mind which prevailed in all the Allied and Associated States, a real "Society of Nations," implying "friendly association" with the enemy peoples, as distinguished from their late "irresponsible Governments," was impossible. An alternative did, however, exist—an alternative for which a precedent could be found and which needed more leadership rather than cumbrous machinery for its application. This alternative would have consisted of three processes: the conclusion of a Preliminary Peace with Germany and her Allies, combined with suspension of blockade; the admission to the Peace Conference of delegates representing the different parts of the German Empire, Austria, Hungary, Bulgaria, and Turkey; collaboration with these delegates in the settlement of territorial readjustments in accordance with the principles enunciated in President Wilson's speeches and the "Fourteen Points." The Congress of Vienna had set the precedent by admitting to its councils Talleyrand, the representative of a conquered State which had changed its form of government in the hour of defeat. The conclusion of a "Preliminary Peace" presented no difficulty. Germany had reached the lowest pitch of weakness; her military and naval forces had ceased to exist, her population was dependent on the Allies for supplies of food, she was torn by internal dissensions, and the Socialist and Democratic parties had gained the upper hand. Bavaria was showing separatist tendencies, and her example might be followed by other German States. The same conditions prevailed in the other enemy

countries to an even more marked degree. In short, the Allies could have counted on acceptance of any preliminary peace terms which they might have chosen to impose. They could have ensured their fulfilment, not only by the maintenance of military forces on provisional and temporary frontiers, but also by the threat of a reimposition of an effective blockade. In an atmosphere free from the blighting influences of an armistice, dispassionate treatment of a mass of ethnical questions would have been possible. An appeal could have been made to the common sense and interests of the enemy peoples, through their statesmen and publicists, which would have disarmed reaction, and which would have made it possible to utilise the more enlightened elements in the key-States of Central Europe for the attainment of a durable peace. A Peace Conference so composed would have been the embryo of a true "Society of Nations," a fitting instrument for the practical application of theories not new nor ill-considered, whose development had been retarded in peaceful, prosperous times, and which now were imperatively demanded by multitudes of suffering people weighed down by sorrow and distress.

Mr. Wilson does not seem to have considered any alternative to the immediate formulation of a covenant of the "League of Nations." He left the all-important question of peace in abeyance, and devoted his energies to the preparation of a document which would serve as an outward and visible sign of personal success. Perhaps he was dismayed by the opposition, in reactionary Allied circles, to moral theories considered by officials to be impracticable and even dangerous, however useful they might once have been for purposes of propaganda. He may have been paralysed amid unaccustomed surroundings where he was not the supreme authority. At any rate he neg-

lected to use a weapon whose potency he, of all rulers, should have known—the weapon of publicity, which was, as ever, at his service and would have rallied to the causes he espoused the support and approval of sincere reformers in every class. He worked in secret and secured adhesion to a draft of the covenant of the "League of Nations," whose colourless and non-committal character betrayed official handiwork.

The man who had arrived in Paris as the bearer of a message, whose echoes had filled the world with hope, left France the bearer of a "scrap of paper." He returned to find his authority lessened. Before, he had stood alone; he came back to take his place as one of the "Big Four." It is given to few men to act as well as to affirm.

Mr. Lloyd George was unable to help the President; his election speeches had been the reverse of a moral exposition of the issues, and the Parliamentary majority they had helped to create allowed no lapses into Liberalism. More than a year had passed since the Prime Minister of Great Britain had stated that the British people were not fighting "a war of aggression against the German people . . . or to destroy Austria-Hungary, or to deprive Turkey of its capital or of the rich and renowned lands of Asia Minor and Thrace which are predominantly Turkish in race." Teschen had not been heard of then, and the demands of Italy and M. Venizelos were either forgotten or ignored. Mr. Lloyd George's native sense and insight would have avoided many pitfalls; the Bullit revelations did no more than bare justice to his acumen in regard to Russia, but he was terrorised by a section of the British Press, which held him relentlessly to vote-catching pledges, however reckless or extravagant.

The Prime Minister of the French Republic was preoccupied with revenging past humiliations, with

retrieving the fortunes of his country and making it secure. He did lip-service to the "League of Nations," but talked of it with sardonic humour, and did it infinite harm. A dominating personality and a prodigious intellect enriched by wide experience were lost to the cause of human progress. No rare occurrence, when the possessors of these gifts are old.

With the progress of the Conference, M. Clemenceau's influence became stronger. He had made fewer public speeches than his colleagues, and perhaps that simplified his task. "Certain it is that words, as a Tartar's bow do shoot back upon the understanding of the wisest, and mightily entangle and pervert the judgment."

While precious months were being devoted to framing the draft covenant of the League of Nations, Commissions appointed by the Peace Conference had been busy preparing reports on multifarious points of detail. These reports were the work of experts, and could not fail to influence the final decisions of the Supreme Council; as a matter of fact, they were followed textually in some of the weightiest decisions reached. The men who prepared them were in no sense statesmen, they were trammelled by official routine and exposed to all manner of outside influences. The whole tone of life in Paris was inimical to an objective attitude. Clamours for vengeance distorted the natural desire of honest men in France and Belgium for security against future aggression by a resuscitated Germany. The big industrial interests wanted to stifle German trade and at the same time exact a huge indemnity; they exploited the expectation of the working classes that, as a result of victory, Allied industry would be given a fair start in future competition with the enemy States.

In the absence of any higher guidance, either moral or informed, statecraft was entirely lacking in the

proceedings of the Conference, yet the situation was such that, if adroitly handled, measures were possible which would have contributed powerfully to the security of France and Belgium, by attenuating and dissipating reactionary elements in the German Empire. Advantage might have been taken of the distrust inspired by Prussia in the other German States, to create autonomous and neutral zones in the Palatinate and the territory formerly comprised in the Hauseatic League, to assist Bavaria to shake off Prussian hegemony, and become a component with German Austria of a new Catholic State in South-Eastern Europe, where conflicting national aims and unruly populations needed a counterweight.

No such measures were taken. The Conference was obsessed with details. Every conceivable question was discussed before the one that was most urgent—the conclusion of some form of peace which would let the world resume its normal life. A state of affairs was protracted which encouraged the greedy and unscrupulous, which checked any expression of opinion by the “plain people” of President Wilson’s speeches, which gave an opening to militarists, jingo journalists, and politicians, whose ideas were those of German Junkers and who still believed in war.

Jungle law reasserted itself. In an allegoric sense, the Conference was like a jungle through which a forest fire had passed, destroying the scanty verdure it had once possessed, leaving bare, blackened stumps too hard to burn. Some of the larger, fiercer beasts had been expelled; a few remained, and they, too, had been changed. A solitary eagle had descended from his distant eyrie and, like a parrot, screeched incessantly, “Fiume, Fiume, Fjume”—a chuckle followed, it said—“Fourteen Points” but was an obvious aside. The performance was disappointing; polished

and well-turned phrases had been expected from so great a bird. The lion's majestic mien had altered somewhat, his movements were uncertain; from time to time his eyes sought, furtively, a pack of jackals, who should have hunted with him, but, of late, they had grown insolent to their natural leader and reviled him in a high-pitched, daily wail. An old and wounded tiger roamed about the jungle; his strength, so far from being impaired, had become almost leonine; sometimes the jackals joined his own obedient cubs, and then he snarled contentedly while the lion roared with jealousy and rage. The bear was absent; he had turned savage through much suffering, and the wolves who prowled around the outskirts of the jungle prevented him from entering; they howled with terror whenever he approached, and wanted the lion and the tiger to help to kill this dangerous type of bear. A yellow dragon moaned in the far distance, but was unheeded; he was no more a peril and had little left for the other beasts to steal. Jubilant and shrill, the crowing of a cock was heard above the babel of the jungle, announcing, to all who cared to listen, the dawn of fifteen years of liberty in the valley of the Saar.

The Peace Treaties promulgated by the Conference at Paris are impregnated with the atmosphere in which they were drawn up—an atmosphere charged with suspicion and hatred, fear and greed; not one of them is in the spirit of the League of Nations. The Treaty with Germany, in particular, discloses the predominance of French influence in Allied councils. An old French nobleman once remarked, "Les Bourgeois sont terribles lors qu'ils ont eu peur." The conditions imposed on a democratised and utterly defeated Germany are terrible indeed, but curiously ineffective; they are a timid attempt to modify vindictiveness by a half-hearted application of President Wilson's

ethical principles; they satisfy no one; this is their one redeeming feature, since it shows that they might have been even more vindictive and still more futile for the achievement of their purpose, which was, presumably, a lasting peace. Militarists and reactionaries could not conceive a state of peace which did not repose on force and the military occupation of large tracts of German territory. They were twenty years behind the times. They did not realise that armies in democratic countries consist of human beings who observe and think, who cannot be treated as machines, and bidden to subordinate their reasoning faculties to the designs of a few selfish and ambitious men. Liberal thinkers, on the other hand, were shocked at Treaties which inflamed the hearts of seventy million German-speaking people with hatred and a desire for revenge, which cemented German unity, which aroused a widespread irredentism and gave an incentive to industrious, efficient populations to devote their time and efforts to preparations for a future war and not to the arts of peace. Such men were neither visionaries nor sentimentalists, they were practical men of affairs, who foresaw that security could not be attained by visiting the sins of outworn mediæval Governments on the heads of their innocent victims throughout Central Europe; that by the employment of such methods the "League of Nations" was turned into a farce; that exasperation would foster and provoke recalcitrance; that Germany would be a magnet to every dissatisfied State; that other leagues and combinations might be formed, on which it would be impossible to enforce a limitation of their armaments. They pointed out that the imposition of fabulous indemnities was two-edged, that payment of nine-tenths of the sums suggested would have to be made in manufactured goods or raw materials, a mode of payment which, in the end, might be more profit-

able to those that paid than to the peoples who received.

Inaugurated in an idealism which may have been exaggerated but was none the less sincere, the Peace Conference has blighted the hope and faith of "plain people" everywhere, and has consecrated cant. Respectability has been enthroned amid circumstances of wealth and power; in its smug and unctuous presence morality has found no place. The foundations of a cleaner, better world have not been laid; the apex has been placed on a pyramid of errors, on which nothing can be built.

* * * *

Versailles was chosen as the setting for a historic ceremony—the signature of the Peace Treaty with what was still the German Empire, though the imperial throne was vacant and a workman presided at the councils of an Imperial Government. The choice was not without significance. Democracy had triumphed, and, in the hour of victory, had followed the example of autocratic rulers when making peace with other autocrats. It was therefore only fitting that this Peace Treaty, whose terms are inspired by the spirit of the past, should be signed in a palace of the Kings of France.

A palace on an artificial eminence, where once had been flat marshes and wild forest land, built by a monarch to whom nothing was impossible, and for the indulgence of whose whims no cost was deemed excessive, either in money or in human lives. Viewed from the west on misty autumn evenings, it seems an unearthly fabric; the exquisite harmony of its line crowns and completes the surrounding landscape, floating, as by enchantment, above the tree tops, as light in texture as the clouds. A palace such as children dream of, when fairy stories haunt their minds, peopling the world with princes young and

valiant, princesses beautiful and wayward, whose parents are virtuous Kings and Queens and live in palaces like Versailles.

Below the terraces a broad alley stretches westward and meets the horizon at two poplars. Beyond these isolated trees nothing but the sky is seen. They stand like sentinels guarding the confines of a vast enclosure, where art and nature have conspired to shut out the ugly things in life. A French Abbé, whose cultured piety ensures him a welcome in this world and admission to the next, said that the royalty of France had passed between and beyond those poplars—into nothingness.

Amid a galaxy of statues of monarchs, statesmen, warriors, goddesses and nymphs, only one piece of sculpture serves as a reminder that a suffering world exists—the face of a woman of the people, graven in bass-relief upon the central front. An old and tragic face, seamed with deep wringles, sullen, inscrutable, one can imagine it hunched between shoulders bowed by toil and shrunk by joyless motherhood. The eyes of stone, to which a sculptor's art has given life, are hard and menacing, hopeless but not resigned; beneath their steadfast gaze had passed all that was splendid in a bygone age, the greatest autocrats on earth and women of quite a different sort.

“ Sceptre and crown had tumbled down
And in the level dust been laid
With the poor yokel's scythe and spade.”*

There were many faces in France and other countries which wore this same expression, even after the triumph of Democracy over the autocrats of Central Europe. They were not to be seen, however, on the

* In the original—“ Sceptre and crown will tumble down,
And in the level dust be laid,”

etc.

terraces of the palace when the Treaty of Peace with Germany was signed in the "Hall of Mirrors," where men in black were met together on yet another "Field of Blackbirds," where, after months of bickering, the larger birds were expounding to their weaker brethren the latest infamies of Jungle Law. The well-dressed men and women who thronged those terraces were something between the proud aristocrats who had created the legend of Versailles and the masses of the underworld who had survived them, and yet they seemed further from the two extremes than the extremes were from each other; they were not of the stuff of leaders and were too prosperous to be led; their manner was almost timid to the soldiers on duty at this ceremony, who, though men of the people, were disdainful to civilians after four years of war. One felt that this was a class which might, at no distant date, attempt to imitate some Roman Emperors and pay Pretorian Guards. A catastrophic war had contained no lesson for these people; for them, its culmination at Versailles was far more a social than a political event; they took no interest in politics, they wanted security for property and a Government of strong men who would keep the masses well in hand. They were not real democrats, and they cheered both long and loud, when the men, who between them had betrayed Democracy, emerged from the stately palace to see the fountains play.

CHAPTER XVI.

• LOOKING BACK AND LOOKING FORWARD.

SOMEONE has said that evolution is a fact and progress a sentiment. This definition casts a doubt on progress: it implies that progressive thinkers are in the category of sentimentalists who do not deal in facts.

If no alternative existed between looking back on the slow advance of evolution and looking forward in a spirit of sentimental hope, the present situation would be dark indeed; a pessimist might be inclined to conclude that civilisation had ceased to advance, that, on the contrary, its movement was retrograde.

There is surely a middle course—a course not easy to pursue. It consists in standing on the ground of fact, however miry, with heart and head uplifted, and looking forward, with the determination not to let mankind sink to the level of the beasts that perish, eager to reach some higher ground.

* * * *

Looking back over the past seven years, a reflective mind is appalled by their futility and waste, and yet an analysis of this period as a whole reveals that quality of ruthless logic, of inevitable sequence, to be found in some Greek tragedies, in which the naked truth in all its horror is portrayed with supreme dramatic art.

Each phase of this blood-stained period discloses the same carnival of mendacity and intrigue, the subordination of the public interest to the designs of a few ambitious men, the exploitation of patriotism, self-sacrifice, patience and valour by officials, whose

inhuman outlook and mediocrity of mind were screened by a mask of mystery. A piecemeal study would be profitless. Military instruction might be gained from off-recurring slaughter, and hints on how to hoodwink peoples could certainly be gathered from spasmodic intervals of peace. But these are not the lessons the world seeks, they are precisely what it wishes to forget. Rather, the effort must be made to trace the underlying impulse in this tragic drama, which runs through it like a "leit-motif," which welds together processes so varying in their nature, and renders them cumulative and inseparable, until they culminate in one unified and comprehensive act.

In its broadest sense, that impulse had its source in a frame of mind, in a false conception, expressed in outworn governmental systems left uncontrolled and tolerated by the victims, who, though suffering, dreaded change. Indisputably, the Central Empires were the aggressors against the peace of Europe; they presented a supreme example of autocratic Governments which aimed at world-dominion both in a political and economic sense. To the ruling classes in Germany and Austria-Hungary, the war of liberation in the Balkans in 1912 was an opportunity to be seized, with a lack of scruple as cynical as it was frank, because they hoped to fish in troubled waters; its perversion into an internecine struggle was considered clever diplomacy. The Treaty of Bucharest in 1913 was regarded as a triumph of statecraft, since it caused a readjustment of the "Balance of Power" in favour of themselves. To these nefarious proceedings the rest of Europe gave a tacit acquiescence. The family of nations consisted of six Great Powers; Small States existed under suzerainty and were treated as poor relations. Their rights were nebulous and sometimes inconvenient, not to be recognised until they could be extorted. This happened sometimes.

The "Balance of Power" was a net with closely woven meshes. Even the strongest carnivore in the jungle required, at times, the assistance of a mouse. Judged by its conduct of affairs in 1912 and the early part of 1913, the British Government was without a Continental policy; at first, it seemed to favour Austria-Hungary; the Albanian settlement and the Treaty of Bucharest were a triumph for the "Ball-Platz,"* though both these transactions were shortsighted and unjust. French policy was paralysed by fear of Germany, and owing to a mistaken choice of representatives, in almost all the Balkan capitals, the French Foreign Office was curiously ill-informed. Italy was the ally of the Central Powers and could not realise her own colonial aspirations without their help. Russia, as ever, was the enigma, and Russian policy in the Balkans, though ostensibly benevolent, aimed at the reduction of Bulgaria and Servia to the position of vassal States. Rumania was also an ally of the Central Powers. Dynastic and economic reasons made her their client. She held aloof from purely Balkan questions, and posed as the "Sentinel of the East."

Under such conditions, it was idle to expect an objective and reasonable, or even decent, handling of Balkan questions. Bulgaria was sacrificed ruthlessly to opportunism and expediency. The most efficient race on the south bank of the Danube was embittered and driven into unnatural hostility to Russia. The Balkan *bloc* was disrupted by skilful manipulation of national feeling, which was in many cases honest and sincere, and thus, the Central Empires were able to so dispose the pawns on the European chessboard as to facilitate their opening moves, if, from a continuance in their policy of expansion, there should ensue a European War.

* The former Austro-Hungarian Foreign Office in Vienna.

In due course, as was inevitable, the "Great War" came. During the latter part of 1913 Great Britain had been inclined to favour Russia's Balkan policy. This suited France, and so the sides were set. Throughout the war, the British Empire, save for a brief and disastrous experiment at Gallipoli, continued to be without an Eastern policy. The greatest Mohammedan Power in the world allowed itself to be swayed by French and Russian counsels, and the heritage handed down and perfected by Warren Hastings, Clive, and Canning was left to the mercy of events. No Frenchman, however gifted, can grasp the scope and mission of the British Empire; to the Pan-Slavs who directed Russia's foreign policy, our far-flung supremacy in the East was an object of envy and a stumbling block.

Although the neutral Balkan States, while they remained neutral, were courted assiduously by the Allied Powers, they were still looked upon as pawns. A policy which can only be described as unprincipled was pursued. British prestige became the tool of French and Russian intrigue, and Great Britain's reputation for tenacity, justice and fair play was jeopardised.

Rumania, once she became our ally, was treated as a dependency of Russia, although the most superficial student of the past history of these two States could have foreseen her fate. But she, like Servia and Greece, was only a little country and counted as small dust in the balance. She could be over-run and devastated, once she had played her part; that was a little country's lot. The frame of mind which, subconsciously perhaps, possessed the so-called democratic Governments was not so unlike that of the actively vicious autocratic Empires; they, too, relied on experts and officials, to whom Small States and helpless peoples were negligible factors, who respected

only force and wealth, who viewed human affairs exclusively from those standpoints, and, wrapped in a mantle of self-satisfaction, as ignorant of psychology as of true statesmanship, could not perceive the portents of the times.

It is possible that historians of the future will select three events as the outstanding features of the "Great World War": the participation of the United States of America, the Russian Revolution, and the collapse of the German Military System. The first of these was, undoubtedly, an expression of idealism. Cynics may say that America was influenced by self-interest, but they invariably judge humanity by their own worldly standard. The "plain people" of America were inspired by nobler sentiments; the measure of their sincerity in the cause of liberty is their present disillusionment, caused by the failure of democratic Governments to make a democratic peace. The intervention of America undoubtedly ensured and accelerated the final triumph of the Allies; but it did more than that, it solidarised democracy for a brief period, and demonstrated the willingness of free people to sacrifice their lives and money for an unworldly cause. It was, to a great extent, an Anglo-Saxon movement, and opened up, till then, undreamt of vistas; it was a light which, although a transient gleam, lit up the way for the regeneration of the world.

The Russian Revolution was the outcome of misgovernment by a corrupt bureaucracy, and the passionate desire of an exhausted, suffering population for a return to peace. Misconceived by the rest of Europe and misdirected by Kerensky, it degenerated into civil war; yet it did prove that even the most down-trodden people possess the power and instinct of self-liberation.

The collapse of the German Military System removed a formidable barrier to human progress. Its efficiency,

as an administrative and national institution, had seemed to justify the glorification of the State at the expense of individual freedom; a dangerous example had been set which militarists in every land took as a model and a guide. Had Germany been ruled by statesmen, this odious system might have gained a further lease of life; by a fortunate fatality it became the instrument of its own destruction, it was the sword on which Old Europe fell, its very excellence caused that finely tempered blade to last until it broke into a thousand pieces, thereby providing a conclusive revelation of the futility of force.

Events so portentous should have influenced the minds of delegates who were worthy of the name of statesmen, when they met to make the Peace at Paris. Unfortunately, this was not the case. The same frame of mind permeated the Conference as that which had existed before and throughout the war. Small States and peoples everywhere were sacrificed to the interests of the greater victorious Powers, whose spokesmen were the representatives and members of a propertied and privileged class. Two fears were ever present in their minds: Germany, the monster python State, had committed suicide, and thus had brought them victory, but this victory was so sudden and unexpected that they could hardly understand its meaning. They imagined that following on it would come a swift reaction, that the old system would revive; in fact, they half hoped that it would, it conjured up less disturbing visions than this revolt of a warlike, disciplined people, this abrupt transition from the old order to the new. Even victory had lost its savour; it seemed to them a source of danger that the most evil Government should fall, and so they set to work to recreate the bogey of German militarism with propaganda's artful aid. The other bogey was the dread that a communistic experiment might succeed in

Russia. Rather than let that happen they were one and all prepared to wage another war.

· In an evil hour for democracy, the four heads of the Governments of the Allied and Associated States appointed themselves as principal delegates at the Conference, in spite of the fact that their presence was essential in their respective countries, where a host of measures dealing with social legislation were already long overdue; further, their incompetence and unsuitability for the task before them were manifest, and yet, beyond their decisions, there was no real appeal. Each of the Big Four had, at one time or another, reached place and power as a tribune of the people, but when they met in Paris they had undergone a change. Mr. Lloyd George had sold his soul for a mess of pottage, in the shape of a Parliamentary majority secured by truckling to reactionaries and the vulgar clamour of the Jingo Press. Mr. Wilson failed to make good his eloquent professions as an apostle of democracy; he succumbed to the atmosphere of Paris, and only succeeded in irritating Italy without establishing the principles for which he was supposed to stand. With two such men in charge of Anglo-Saxon policy, the triumph of M. Clemenceau* was not left long in doubt. He could count in advance on the support of capitalist elements in Great Britain and the United States, and thus, the power and wealth of the British Empire and America were used by an aged Frenchman as a stick to beat helpless, starving peoples and to slake a Latin craving for revenge. A shameful rôle, indeed, for a race which has never known ultimate defeat and has always been magnanimous in the hour of victory.

* During the Conference, a well-known Pole, whose reputation for shrewd observation is established, remarked: "Mr. Lloyd George has a passion for popularity and is the most popular man in Paris, but the 'Tiger' is running the British Empire."

Mr. Lloyd George and President Wilson took back to their respective countries a settlement of European questions of which no sensible English-speaking citizen could possibly approve. It was at best a liquidation of the war and marked an intermediate phase. The Austro-Hungarian Empire, as an administrative and economic unit, has been destroyed, but no attempt has yet been made to put anything practical in its place; Eastern and Central Europe have been Balkanised, and in the Balkans the evils of the Treaty of Bucharest have been consummated; frontiers and disabilities have been imposed upon the German people which have aroused a widespread irredentism and cannot be maintained; the policy of intervention against the Soviet Government in Russia has been immoral and inept, while the vacillation in regard to Turkey cannot fail to have serious repercussion throughout the whole Mohammedan world.

A state of moral anarchy has been created, both in the conquered and victorious States. In France, sane opinion is unable to control the activities of roving generals obsessed with the Napoleonic legend; in the United States the general tendency is to leave Europe to its fate, but disgust with European diplomatic methods has not prevented certain forms of imitation—temporarily a militarised America is handling internal problems on Russian lines in the worst days of Czarist rule; in Great Britain, irresponsible politicians have brought discredit on our Parliamentary system, the House of Commons does not represent the more serious elements in the country, Labour is restless and dissatisfied, and even moderate men are tempted to resort to unconstitutional methods, to "direct action," as the only means of obtaining recognition for the workers' reasonable demands.

The decisions of the Supreme Council of the Allies are without any moral sanction because, owing to its

past acts, the moral sense of the entire world is blunted. Revolution is threatening throughout Central and Eastern Europe; around and beyond the main centres of infection, the poison is spreading to the world's remotest parts; India and Northern Africa are filled with vague but menacing unrest. When the lassitude of war is passed, more serious developments must be expected: D'Annunzio and Bermondts are but the forerunners of many similar adventurers who, both in Europe and in Asia, will find followers and funds.

Truly, Old Europe has committed suicide. The autocratic Empires have perished by the sword; the Western States, under the rule of spurious democrats, bid fair to perish by the Peace. Democracy has been betrayed by its own ignorance and apathy, by misplaced confidence in mediocre men, by failure to be democratic, by permitting politicians and officials to usurp the people's sovereign power.

A new danger is on the horizon. The men who scoffed at progress, who at first derided the League of Nations, and to whose influence were due the prolongation of the Armistice and the worst features of the Treaties, are alarmed by the present situation. The official mind is seeking for a remedy, and it now professes to have found it in the "League of Nations," to which it does lip-service, meaning to use it, in the first place, as a buffer, and later as an instrument. These men do not recognise that with the downfall of the autocratic Empires materialism in its most efficient form has proved a failure; the fallen fortunes of Germany, Austria-Hungary, and Russia convey no warning to them; they think that once again the public can be tricked; they have made a German peace and are so blind to facts that, in spite of the testimony of Ludendorff, they do not realise that victory was gained by peoples, who were unconquerable because they thought their cause was just. Theirs is the

frame of mind of German "Junkers"; to them the masses are like cattle, to be driven in a herd; they will, if given a free rein, once more subserve the interests of capitalists, and Governments will be influenced by men who, having great possessions, will take counsel of selfish fears.

A League which includes Liberia and excludes Germany, Austria, Hungary and Russia, and whose covenant is embodied in the Peace Treaties, makes a bad start. The intention has been expressed of inviting Germany, at some future date, to become a member of the League. Whether this invitation will be accepted will depend on circumstances; in Europe's present state of instability the omens are far from favourable to acceptance. A truly democratic Germany will be a tremendous force in Europe, and may find in Russia, under a Soviet Government, an ally more in sympathy with progress than either Great Britain or the Latin Powers under reactionary governments. The Russians, once our allies, regard the French and British with hatred and resentment, and these same feelings animate all the nationalities on whom have been forced insulting terms of Peace. Poland, Czecho-Slovakia, Yougo-Slavia and the Greater Rumania are political experiments. These States contain men of great ability, who may, in the abstract, accept the principles of the League, but their position is neither safe nor easy; in no single case can national aspirations obtain full satisfaction without impinging on the territory of a neighbour, on each and every frontier fixed in Paris there is a pocket in dispute. It is doubtful whether any of the small Allied States can be considered trustworthy members of a League, which, while preaching internationalism, has perverted nationalism into a "will to power," for which conditions of membership are defined by conquerors whose conduct hitherto has revealed an entire lack of an international spirit, save

in regard to international finance. So many temptations to recalcitrance exist that, if Germany remains outside the League, another combination might be formed, under German leadership, and including Russia, Austria, Hungary, one or more small States and Bulgaria, a combination untrammelled by self-denying ordinances, compact, almost continuous, controlling the land routes of two continents. No limitation of its armaments could be enforced on such a combination; it would have access to Russia's vast natural resources, and, if war came, for the first time in history, a coalition of belligerent States would be impervious to blockade by sea.

While the Treaties stand, and while the present frame of mind of the Allied Governments continues, such is the situation into which the world is drifting, and for which the Covenant of the League, as drafted, provides no panacea. Even the leading members of that League are dubious adherents to its moral implications; each of them makes some reservation, not based on the principles of progress, but inspired by a distorted sense of patriotism which, in its essence, is the outcome and cult of private interests.

The League of Nations was unfortunate in its birthplace. Throughout the Conference the frenzied merriment in Paris was typical of the cosmopolitan class which has grown up in an industrial age. These parasites on the wealth of nations possess neither the spirit of *nobless oblige* nor any sympathy with the masses, and yet they influence affairs; they appear light and frivolous, as though they had no interest in life beyond dancing and feasting on the ruins of Old Europe, and deadening reflection with the discords of jazz bands; but behind these puppets in the show are cold and calculating men, who use "Society" and the atmosphere it creates to kill enthusiasm, to fetter and sensualise weaker minds. After listening to the

conversation at a semi-official and fashionable gathering last June in Paris, a French priest pronounced the opinion that only a second redemption could save the world. This old man was always charitable in his judgments. He had heard the confessions of many sinners, but had been roused to moral indignation by the heartless cynicism of the talk around him; his feelings as a Christian had been outraged, and, although this remark was made simply and without affectation, it rang like the denunciation of a prophet, the speaker's kind eyes kindled and his small, frail body seemed to grow in size. My mind went back to the Cathedral Church at Jassy one Easter Eve. There, for a time, had reigned the proper spirit; it had been fugitive, like all such moods. As Renan says: "*On n'atteint l'idéal qu'un moment.*"*

If Europe is not to relapse into a race of armaments, world politics must be controlled by forces less selfish and insidious. A more serious element is required in public life, an element which will represent the innumerable men and women who work with their hands and brains. These are the people who desire peace, who find and seek no profit in a state of war. They are neither revolutionaries nor faddists, they are workers; and in their ranks are not a few who have attained to fame and fortune by a rare combination of heart and intellectual gifts. They protest against the Treaties as a flagrant violation of all principles of right, as an attempt to crush the spirit of the conquered peoples, to visit the crimes of "irresponsible Governments" on the heads of innocents; they denounce a policy in Russia which makes the Russian people pariahs, and despise the men who, before peace had been ratified with Germany, invited collaboration in the blockade of Russia from

* The ideal is reached for a moment only.

the men they had called the Huns. " Plain People " in all lands echo these sentiments. They are weary of being misrepresented by reactionary Governments, of having their feelings misinterpreted by officials caught up in the vortex of " Society " and by unscrupulous journalists, who have waxed fat by preaching hatred and have battered on slaughter like birds of prey.

A great fact in evolution has occurred. Humanity is at the parting of the ways. Old Europe's suicide will culminate in world-wide chaos, unless democracy asserts itself and counsels of wisdom and sanity prevail. Mankind can be rescued from degeneration, if out of the strong there comes forth sweetness, if races possessed of strength determine, in this hour of trial, to shed on those who walk in darkness a clear and kindly light. Force, applied physically, has proved futile, but moral force remains, whose application is by example, not by precept, which may involve temporary sacrifices, but which lays sure foundations whereon to build.

To all the English-speaking peoples this moral force is no new weapon. We have applied it in regard to slavery; " Clemency " Canning proved its potency in India, when, in a time of grave disorder, he refused to rule in anger and put his veto on harsh or ill-considered acts; later, true statesmanship and morality inspired our treatment of the conquered Boers. All these are records which illuminate the pages of our adventurous and storied past.

Unfortunately, in recent times the spirit of which such policies are born has suffered an eclipse. Great Britain has had no continental policy, the British Government has worked in leading-strings, and, as a consequence, our Empire has been imperilled and our honour has been betrayed. •

The English-speaking peoples are now at the summit of their power, they are already leaguers of States, and

could, and should, be the champions of democracy; but first they must set their own houses in good order, for charity begins at home.

No covenant or piece of parchment will hold together discontented nations. Industrial peace in each and every State must be the prelude to international goodwill. Both in our Empire and America the forces of reaction are obdurate and strong, but it is possible to overcome them by constitutional means. The English-speaking peoples are, at heart, profoundly democratic; it is the instinct of our race. A two-fold mission lies before us: first, we must liberate ourselves and cleanse our own Augean stables; then we can work together, and make an irresistible appeal to the leaders of democracy in other lands, inviting them to join with us in a great League of democratic nations, from which would be excluded only the backward States.

A policy such as that outlined would not be one of "splendid isolation," nor, on the other hand, would the English-speaking peoples subordinate their instincts and their principles to bolstering up old-fashioned shibboleths, to re-establishing a "Balance of Power" or any other artificial system which haunts official minds. It would revise pernicious treaties, and study with sympathy and knowledge vexed ethnical and economic questions, striving to heal still gaping wounds for which no remedy has been found in treaties misnamed "of peace." It would recognise the rights of nationalities everywhere, and not limit the sovereign independence of the Small States which we have hitherto exploited. The representatives of the English-speaking races would be encouraged to be good Europeans, but neither patrons nor partisans. It would approach the Russian people, under its chosen form of Government, and help in the restoration of law and order, instead of fomenting civil war. It would be free from social and capitalistic shackles, and

LOOKING BACK & LOOKING FORWARD 187

represent the views of those who know the dignity of work.

Time presses. The reaction of foreign policy on the internal affairs of every State is becoming increasingly direct. In all lands the working classes have awakened to the fact that their interests are the same, and the feeling is almost universal that, from the workers' point of view, the greatest war in history was an internecine struggle and has been fought in vain. This impression is strengthened by the suspicion that the old, discredited methods are being followed, that the destinies of peoples are still at the mercy of secret diplomacy, that sinister motives, and not patriotism, dictate the preaching of race hatred, that reactionary forces, both in the Press and politics, have gained the upper hand.

Industrial and international peace will be precarious while present conditions last. Peace Treaties have been signed, but slaughter and terrorism continue. In Central Europe, great rivers, which are serene and splendid highways, are still defiled with human blood, still serve as barriers and are charged with sighs. A clamour of voices has arisen, the cry is "forward," it is uttered by millions of distracted, exasperated people become articulate since the war. From every quarter comes the tramp of hurrying feet, a mighty movement is in progress, its leaders are fiery enthusiasts determined to amend an out-of-date wage-system; they demand a freer, wider life for manual workers, and are impatient of delay; their aims are righteous, though, at times, their methods may be unwise; they cannot, like sleeping waters, be pent up, they seek a useful outlet; they and the millions whom they lead want to be masters of their fate, to share control and, as free men and women, to turn the new world's mill. All lovers of freedom are in this move-

ment, the prerogative of the English-speaking peoples is to direct and purify it, their place is in the van.

Egyptian monarchs built pyramids as tombs; Old Europe, during the process of its suicide, built up a pyramid of errors which may well serve, not only as the tomb of mediæval systems, of false conceptions, but also as a monument to remind succeeding generations of the errors of the past.

A pyramid is a structure whose form is final, just bare, blank walls converging to a point, and there it ends, offering a symbol of that human pride which dares to set a limit to the progress of mankind.

Progress admits of no finality. Filled with the sentiment of progress and standing on the ground of fact, humanity can look forward and ever upward, and thus can rear a nobler edifice—a temple broad-based on liberty and justice, whose columns are poised on sure foundations, columns that soar and spring eternal, emblems of youth and hope.

